

THE SCORE

A MUSIC MAGAZINE

Editor: William Glock

Number 10, December 1954

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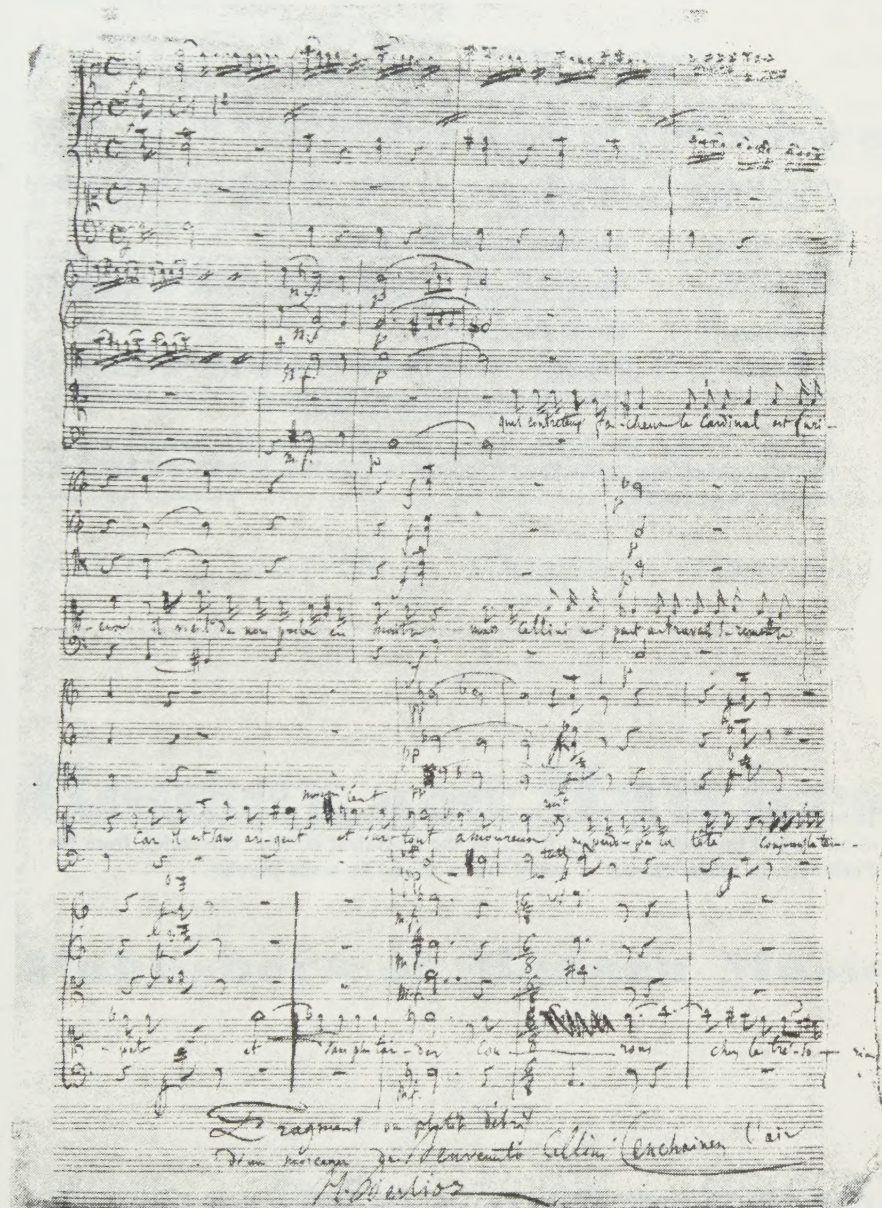
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Editor: WILLIAM GLOCK

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IN THE MARCH ISSUE WE HOPE TO INCLUDE:

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| Wilfrid Mellers: | Reflexions on music, dance and drama in 17th Century England. |
| Colin Mason: | The music of Iain Hamilton. |
| Daniel Jones: | An attempt to formulate general aesthetic principles through music-aesthetics. |
| David Drew: | Olivier Messiaen (II). |
| Sybil Eaton: | Two great violin teachers: Flesch and Dounis. |
| William Glock: | The Third Programme and Contemporary Music, 1946-1954. |

Also news of I.M.A. activities; reviews of new English operas (*Troilus and Cressida*, *The Midsummer Marriage*, chamber operas by Elisabeth Lutyens and Malcolm Arnold); book reviews.

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THE SCORE

AND I.M.A. MAGAZINE

Editor: William Glock

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Number 10, December 1954

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The text of hitherto unpublished letter by Berlioz opposite page 6, is as follows:

Paris 3 Mars 1860

Mon cher Silas,

Je suis très flatté de votre intention de me dédier votre oratorio et j'accepte avec reconnaissance l'honneur que vous me faites. Mais votre fils ne doit pas avoir un parrain lointain, ce serait une illusion. Ensuite je ne crois ni ne professe la religion Catholique, je *proteste* même que je n'y crois pas, donc sous ce rapport je suis *protestant*. Je suis dans le fait Nothingist, comme un tas de braves américains. Seulement mon Nothingism n'est pas une religion.

Je ne puis souffrir aucune de ces folies, philosophies, théories, croyances, extravagances, sottises, bêtises, bamboches, balivernes, foutasses, fadaises, je ne crois à rien, je suis malade, je vômis tout. Elevez votre fils en vrai Gaulois, qu'il ne craigne qu'une chose, l'écroulement du ciel sur sa tête; qu'il ne craigne pas Dieu sourtout. Et quand il sera grand s'il tombe amoureux d'une Juive-Noire, bâtarde d'un bourreau et s'il veut l'épouser, laissez le faire.

Voice le joli parrain que vous aviez envie de lui donner!
adieu tout à vous

H. Berlioz

The first two sentences are printed in *New Letters of Berlioz, 1830-1868*, edited by Jacques Barzun. Columbia University Press, 1954. The remainder of the letter, however, has never appeared before, and is published here by kind permission of Cecil Hopkinson.

Édouard Silas, pianist and composer, was born in Amsterdam in 1827, and from 1850 till his death in 1909 he lived in London. His oratorio *Joash* was performed at the Norwich Festival in 1863.

COMMENT

No music magazine can hope to benefit all its readers all the time. If it includes an article written in professional terms, it will gravel the ordinary intelligent reader who, as Virgil Thomson once said, 'is occupied with reality and finds pleasure in the constant search for convincing transcripts of it', in music as elsewhere. If it includes an article such as Jacques Barzun's 'Music into Words', doubtless of interest to the class of reader just described, it will bore many musicians who have no patience with aesthetics or with any intellectual consideration of the art they practise. If, again, it includes an article on the principles of vocal technique, it may appeal very little either to composers or to the ordinary intelligent reader, and perhaps very little to pianists or conductors; and of course it may irritate most teachers of singing even while it inspires (it may be hoped) those students who are being badly taught. Yet I believe that a magazine, unless it is to be purely scholarly, should interest itself in many fields of musical thought and endeavour; and that it should express what it has to say in the terms that seem appropriate and necessary. These may sometimes be of a technical order, and thus incomprehensible here and there to the intelligent layman and to many practising musicians as well. The obvious instance in the present issue is David Drew's article on Messiaen. So far as I know, it is the first substantial study of Messiaen to appear in this country; and as it deals with a composer who has aroused such controversy and evoked such bitter criticism, it is as well to be shown what it is that Messiaen actually does, what are the principles and presuppositions upon which his music rests. And perhaps this article by David Drew will serve a second purpose. As he remarks in writing about the Darmstadt Summer School of New Music, 'Webern is the father of the newest developments, Messiaen the godfather'. We have to approach the youngest generation of continental composers through these two masters. But while Webern is known to fairly many in this country, Messiaen is not; and so the present study of him should help to fill a serious gap in our knowledge, and enable us to follow a little more closely the experiments of the *avant-garde*. Let us hope also that more of the music itself will be heard over here before long.

So much for the contents of the present issue, and the general policy of the magazine. But there is also a change of title. In keeping with this new title, each issue will devote a number of pages to the activities of the *International Music Association*, an enterprise greatly valued by those who know the club and its work in London. An introductory letter by Sir Adrian Boult, the President of the I.M.A., appears on page 67.

W.G.

BERLIOZ: VARIOUS ANGLES OF APPROACH TO HIS WORK

Robert Collet

More than twenty years ago a well-known critic made the remark that in the course of the preceding half-century the music of Berlioz had been able to survive in the face of determined opposition, but had not been able *finally* to wear down and defeat that opposition. Behind this remark would seem to lie the assumption that the reputation of an artist should eventually become fixed, and that he is eventually accepted as a supremely great, a not so great, a minor or a negligible artist. Actually all reputations are in a state of semi-flux; the fact that a man's work is still the subject of controversy is often a sign of its lasting vitality; it both attracts and irritates. This is better than becoming an object of false reverence; and false reverence is in a sense one of the worst kinds of irreverence, because it implies that the work is not approached sincerely and with an open mind. When one is told that Berlioz will never be accepted as one of the supremely great composers one cannot help asking in return if it really matters so very much. What can be said is that in the last twenty or thirty years, at any rate in England, the interest in his music has undoubtedly grown, that his works are more often performed, and that both his admirers and his detractors have now a truer grasp of the deeper underlying reasons for their respective attitudes. The focus has shifted. We have learnt to listen *to the music itself* more receptively and more perceptively, and to see Berlioz less as the great romantic figure. We see that it is only a half-truth to call him a revolutionary, and that the weaknesses in his work come not so much from extravagance or lack of orthodox training, as from an occasional lack of self-assurance that can lead to odd lapses into banality and conventionalism. People are less inclined to stress his orchestral innovations as if they alone were of permanent interest, and a realization is gradually dawning of the originality and compelling beauty of his melodic writing. Melody has the central place in his work, like polyphony in Bach's work, or thematic development in Beethoven's; a musician may not necessarily *like* Berlioz's melody, just as he may think Bach's polyphony over-elaborate (as Arnold Bax did), or be repelled by Beethoven's technique of motivial development (like Vaughan Williams in his earlier days). But to say that Berlioz was not a melodist is absurd; it is on a par with saying that Bach is uncontrapuntal, or that Beethoven failed to work his ideas out, or that Chopin had little feeling for the piano. One reason why so much more attention has been paid to Berlioz's orchestration than to his melody is no doubt that he wrote an exceptionally striking treatise on orchestration, which most

L'Art 3 mars 1868

mon cher Lila

Je suis très flattée de votre intention
de me dédier votre oratorio et j'accepte
^{avec reconnaissance} l'honneur que vous me faites. Mais votre
fille ne doit pas avoir un perrain
lointain, ce serait une illusion.
Ensuite je ne crois ni ne professe
la religion Catholique, je proteste
même que je n'y crois pas, donc
sur ce rapport je suis protestant.
Je suis dans le fait Nothingiste,
comme un tas de bons américains.

Seulement mon Nothingism
n'est pas une religion.
Je ne puis souffrir aucun de ces folles,
philosophies, théories, croyances,
extravagances, sottises, bêtises,
bamboches, balivernes, fantaisies, fadaises,
je ne crois à rien, je suis malade,
je vomis tout. Elevez votre fils en
vrai Gaulois, qu'il ne craigne qu'une
chose, l'écrasement du ciel sur
sa tête; qu'il ne craigne pas Dieu
surtout. Et quand il sera grand
s'il tombe amoureux d'une
Juive - Noire, bâtarde d'un bourreau
et s'il veut l'épouser, laissez le
faire.

Voyez le joli parain que
vous avez envie de lui donner!
adieu tout à vous M. Herlihy

musicians have read, while he never tried to explain his methods of melodic construction. Some day a critical study of these methods will have to be made.

The public has gradually become more aware of his later work, or at least more aware of its existence, for it is still very little performed. Most listeners know nothing of *The Trojans* except the *Royal Hunt* and the *Trojan March*, and nothing of *Beatrice and Benedict* except the Overture, though in both these works there are numbers that could perfectly well be given by themselves in broadcast or concert performance. The Beecham broadcasts of the two parts of *The Trojans* in 1947 made a deep impression, but they were never followed up by stage performances or even repeated on the air. Of the works of Berlioz's later period only *The Childhood of Christ* seems to have established itself in the repertoire. Of the earlier works the *Fantastic Symphony* and *The Damnation of Faust* deserve the popularity they have slowly acquired; but this popularity may have its dangers in that it tends to buttress the time-honoured conception that Berlioz is above all picturesque and fantastic and only occasionally anything else.

He was of course an unusually original composer and many writers on music are apt to treat him as a more or less isolated phenomenon; his detractors regarding him as a monstrous freak, and his admirers as something quite unique virtually without ancestors or progeny. This view is a gross exaggeration and quite misleading. No great composer is ever as isolated and as without roots as that. Even a very superficial study of his music shows how much he learnt from Beethoven and Gluck (to mention no others), however much he may have been able to transform what he assimilated; in any case his memoirs and his critical writing make very clear the depth of his admirations. The influence of Gluck was perhaps the most profound of all; like that of Virgil it began at a very early age and shows in his last works more strongly than ever. There is something very touching in the steadfastness and humility of Berlioz's devotion to Gluck; to many of us today it seems that his genius was incomparably richer than Gluck's. Gluck achieved a remarkable synthesis of the French and Italian operatic styles and his later operas had a very great influence; in his best moments he achieves a noble simplicity that can be very moving. This happens frequently; but when it does not happen his music is a bit drab, and the dullness is seldom redeemed by any special technical skill. What Berlioz learnt from him was more spiritual than technical, above all an ideal of classical simplicity and serenity. This shows most in the works written after about 1845, but even in the comparatively early *Romeo and Juliet* (1837) there is a great deal that is Gluckian in spirit, particularly in the Love-scene, and in the rather underrated music sung by Friar Laurence in the last section of the work. Berlioz's melodic invention, however, is usually more sustained than Gluck's and his rhythm has a pulsating and nervous vitality that is quite unlike Gluck; curiously enough one is often reminded of Rameau, whose work Berlioz knew only superficially, and for which he felt chiefly a chilly reserve blended with some admiration but little affection.

French writers on music are usually baffled by Berlioz — he does not fit well into their ideas of what a French composer should be. Indeed his influence on French music in the later nineteenth century has been surprisingly small. The influence of

Gounod through Saint-Saëns, Bizet, Massenet and Fauré to Debussy and Ravel was historically far more important.¹ French musicians, even when they have admitted Berlioz's force and originality, have regarded him as being so much 'apart from the main stream of French music' as to be only accidentally a French composer. (It would be true to say perhaps that Berlioz was not very Parisian; he came from a wild mountainous region in south-eastern France.)

Berlioz was unimpressed either by the French composers who were his contemporaries, like Adolphe Adam or Ambroise Thomas, or by his immediate predecessors, like Auber and Boieldieu; and his enthusiasm for Gluck, Beethoven and Weber seemed suspiciously Teutonic; his vogue in Germany at the turn of the century, inspired by musicians like Richard Strauss, Weingartner and Mottl, seemed to confirm French prejudices. These German musicians undoubtedly loved Berlioz deeply and sincerely, but with the exception of Mottl they were attracted principally by elements in his work that are not really the most fundamentally and universally important. They saw him as the great expander of orchestral technique, the founder of programme music (which of course he was not) and as the extreme Romantic. It is doubtful if they realized that perhaps the most salient fact about him was the extent to which he stood apart from the main trends of his time, much as Bach did; both composers in some ways looked backwards and in others well into the future; they were comparatively little affected by the developments that were most in evidence in their own lifetimes, and that were to be carried still further in the half-centuries that followed their deaths. Until about 1830 the influence of John Sebastian Bach was much less striking than the influence of some of his sons or of Domenico Scarlatti or Gluck; similarly even in France — one is tempted to say *especially* in France — the influence of Berlioz was much smaller than the influence of Chopin, Schumann, Liszt or Wagner. All these men, who of course influenced each other, constituted a main stream of nineteenth century musical development; their originality lay more than anywhere else in their harmony, far more than in rhythm or in extended melody; they were strongest where Berlioz was weakest, weakest where he was strongest. Of all the nineteenth century masters Verdi was nearest to Berlioz; they were both predominantly melodists, but there was little direct influence. Even in Verdi's *Requiem* the contrasts with Berlioz's work are as striking as the resemblances. Nevertheless these two men were unquestionably the two greatest composers produced by the Latin nations in a century that was deeply imbued with German ideals and methods.

As a boy Berlioz must have heard far more French and Italian music than German. Gluck was only in a limited sense a German composer; his style was cosmopolitan and the age in which he lived was not interested in musical nationalism. Although for a generation or two before the birth of Berlioz Germany and Austria had undoubtedly produced the most outstanding individual composers in Europe, as a whole German music gave much less to French and Italian music than it received from them. The prevailing climate of musical Europe was still predominantly Latin; it was not until about 1830, when Berlioz was a grown man, that the Germans came

¹ The present writer has no wish to belittle Gounod, who within rather narrow limits was undoubtedly a genuine master.

to be generally regarded as the leading musical nation in Europe. Berlioz as a boy must have absorbed a great deal of very second-rate French and Italian music, yet he probably owed to it far more than he knew; above all his instinctive preoccupation with melody and with clear outlines, and a freedom from the obsession with harmonic complexity and strangeness that became more and more the characteristic of nineteenth century music. We have only lately come to see how dangerous this obsession has been, in spite of the prodigious wealth of fascinating by-products to which it has led. Wagner's music more than any other sums up the trends of this period, and it is difficult to think of any two composers so nearly contemporary and so utterly different in their qualities and their defects as Wagner and Berlioz. They had little in common beyond their devotion to Beethoven; in their melody, their harmony, their rhythm, their orchestration they are completely unlike. Even Liszt, whose name is so often linked with that of Berlioz, is much further from him than most people realize. The two men were personal friends, and Liszt probably understood Berlioz better than most of his contemporaries, and he did much to make his music known. But there was little in common in their styles, particularly in melody and rhythm; it is quite possible to be deeply interested in one of them and indifferent to the other; if one admires both composers, it is for very different reasons. If one wishes to understand Berlioz better one gets little help from his contemporaries, one must go back to the eighteenth century.

Berlioz's admiration for Beethoven is well known, and he certainly studied his orchestral works closely; but Beethoven's influence is spiritual and general rather than specific and technical. Beethoven's methods of symphonic development were not really congenial to Berlioz; the working-out sections of the first movements of the *Fantastic Symphony* and *Harold in Italy*, which are Beethovenian in intention, are the least successful parts of those two works. He admired the later works of Beethoven more than most musicians of his time did, but any influence they had on him was mainly indirect. At the same time his music would have been unimaginably different if he had not known Beethoven's works.

As is well-known his personal relations with Cherubini were not happy but he had a real respect for his music, particularly the Church music which has stood the test of time so much better than the operas and the instrumental music. As a young man Berlioz was rather insensitive to Mozart, but his understanding of him seems to have deepened very much in later years. Of all his works, the most Mozartian in spirit is the late opera *Beatrice and Benedict*.

Among Berlioz's French predecessors two deserve special mention, Lesueur (1760 - 1837) and Méhul (1763 - 1817). Neither of these men was a giant, but their music both historically and intrinsically is more important than is usually recognized. Lesueur, as is well-known, was Berlioz's teacher of composition at the Conservatoire; he also taught Gounod and Ambroise Thomas. He is a most difficult composer to classify. Much of his music is very conventional, and the originality of the best things stands out in the most striking way. He is an example of a rare type of composer; a man without any outstanding technical faculty whose music will often pass suddenly from a level of third-class mediocrity to a level of inspired beauty, but hardly ever

sustains a level of second-class competence. To say that it is a case of the triumph of sincerity over technical weakness is rather obvious, and explains little, but it is not easy to find a better explanation. Lesueur had an interest in ancient music and in plainsong that was uncommon in his time. His music can perhaps be nowadays performed only in fragments, but there is no excuse for neglecting it completely as the French have done for over a century. His most important works are his last two operas, *Ossian* and *La Mort d'Adam*, written between 1800 and 1810. In rhythm, in orchestration and in their magnificent declamatory recitatives these works contain many anticipations of Berlioz. It is known that Beethoven admired Lesueur's music.

The other important French composer of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic period was Méhul. His work is better known than Lesueur's. His opera *Joseph* is still performed in French-speaking countries. His music does not surprise us to the same extent as the best moments in Lesueur do, but its general level is higher and he had a greater mastery of conventional technique. He is perhaps the first French Romantic in music, and he deeply influenced Schubert and Weber. *Der Freischütz* is strikingly indebted to Méhul. Berlioz's early music often reminds one of Méhul; particularly *Les Francs Juges* Overture. Méhul was perhaps most completely successful in his charming and witty comic operas. The Romantic opera *Phrosine et Mélidora* is very striking — full of orchestral scene-painting and experiments with unusual and at times even eccentric instrumental combinations. Méhul's experiments often anticipate Berlioz, but they also reach back to Rameau, who was certainly the most remarkable orchestral virtuoso among the composers of the first half of the eighteenth century. Throughout the eighteenth century the French operatic composers were more interested in orchestration for its own sake than the Italians or even the Germans, and far more inclined to experiment and take risks. In this at least Berlioz was very much in 'a French tradition' — whether there ever was such a thing as 'the French tradition' in music will be discussed shortly. Méhul and Lesueur were certainly the most interesting orchestral writers, and in fact the most interesting composers in other ways in France between Rameau and Berlioz. Others like Philidor, Grétry and Monsigny wrote a certain amount of good music, almost all of it for the stage; at its best it has real charm, but it is apt to lack character and to rely a great deal on clichés. In the latter part of the century most French composers were influenced by Gluck, who might almost be described as the French Handel. Gluck had a narrower musical genius than Handel, and for this and for other reasons he did not overwhelm French music as Handel overwhelmed English music; but there is really a parallel between the two men, and throughout the second half of the eighteenth century the French public gradually forgot Rameau and the earlier composers, as the English public had forgotten Purcell.

Let us now consider the difficult subject of 'the French tradition'. Some people would like to maintain that French music from 1660 to 1760 forms a body of work which can be fitly compared to the literature of the *Grand Siècle*. The idea is misleading; it is not merely that there were fewer major composers than major writers in France in this period, or for that matter in most other periods. The vital difference is this: that the literature of the seventeenth century has always been studied and read for pleasure by a fairly large public; and the plays of the period have never

ceased to be frequently performed. In consequence the works of this period have set a lasting stamp on French literature, however violent and frequent later fluctuations of taste may have been. They created very definite standards, and when later writers rebelled against these standards they were rebelling against something that they were deeply familiar with; their rebellion was an act of oblique homage. The music of the period from Lully to Rameau never had this influence. After Rameau died in 1763 it soon became an old-fashioned curiosity, probably because the art of music was only actively cultivated at that time by a small circle, and was therefore liable to be affected unduly by sudden changes of fashion. Until well after 1870 French musicians of the nineteenth century (the 'Romantic' period) were quite unaffected by the older music; they never felt any need to revolt against it as their literary contemporaries revolted against seventeenth century classicism. The operas of Lully, Campra and Rameau disappeared completely from the stage. There seems to have been no performance of any work of Rameau at the Paris Opéra between 1784 and 1908. In the last fifty years, older French music has become better known, particularly the music for harpsichord. This is in some ways unfortunate; it appears to fit in too well with the view, widely held inside and outside France, that French music to be truly national must be exquisite but small-scale. The dramatic music of Rameau is still treated as a curiosity, in spite of all the eulogistic things that are said about it. Rameau is supposed to be a symbol of the French classical spirit in music, an equivalent in music of Descartes and Poussin and Racine. Fundamentally this is absolutely true, but he will never be a force in French music in the sense that Bach or Mozart are forces in German, and not only German, music, until his works are constantly performed. That they are so little performed is mainly the fault of the direction of the Paris Opéra and the Opéra Comique, which treats them in fact just as it treats the operas of Berlioz — as curiosities to be revived at very long intervals. It is most difficult to believe that the attitude of the French public, which in spite of its blind spots is intelligent enough, would not change if it had the chance of becoming really familiar with the works; which would mean frequent performances for a period of at least five years. After all, the French public was hostile enough to Wagner in the eighteen-sixties.

The operas of Berlioz and Rameau, and perhaps *Pelléas et Mélisande* are the most important works for the stage written by French composers; let anyone make a parallel study of *Castor and Pollux* and *The Trojans* and then ask himself if it is really true that Berlioz is un-French. Gluck was of course not a Frenchman, but he was greatly affected by the tradition of the French stage, and with Lesueur and Méhul he does to some extent link Rameau and Berlioz. In spite of the great change in French opera that took place after the death of Rameau, there are two things which sharply separate French opera from Italian over a period of nearly three hundred years. The first of these is the greater importance in French opera of the symphonic element either in the form of dance-music or of marches or of descriptive orchestral pieces: the *Royal Hunt* in *The Trojans* has many ancestors in old French opera. International composers like Gluck and Piccini orchestrated much more elaborately in their French than in their Italian operas. This may have been partly, but probably only partly, due to the fact that France was a rich country and that

the Paris Opéra could afford larger and better orchestras than the Italian opera houses. Secondly, declamatory and lyrical recitative retained its importance in the French musical drama far more than in Italian opera, in which from the end of the seventeenth century the recitative became more and more *recitativo secco*, contrasting sharply in character with the set musical pieces; the *recitativo stromentato* was employed occasionally and acted as a link between the two styles. In many French operas it can be said that the recitative tends towards lyricism, and the lyrical sections of the opera towards declamation. This is true in Rameau, in Lesueur's *Adam* and in Berlioz's *Trojans* — and in this respect at least Berlioz is more French than Gounod, whose lyricism has a rather Italian flavour.

The point that needs to be emphasized is that the history of French music taken from the twelfth century to the present day is rich and varied but essentially discontinuous, however much French musicians would like us to think otherwise. Over this long period there have been a small number of composers of outstanding genius; a larger number of composers of genuine originality, the quality of whose work has permanent value, even if its range may be comparatively limited; and finally a very large number of accomplished, charming and essentially minor composers. For most people outside France, these and these alone are regarded as truly French; it is widely held that if French music aims at being much more than agreeably slight and well-turned out it is to be suspected of pretentiousness. This is of course a very superficial view, and the wider one's knowledge of French music, the more superficial it seems. It is only if French music is thought of as *nineteenth* century French music that Berlioz may appear to be an outsider.

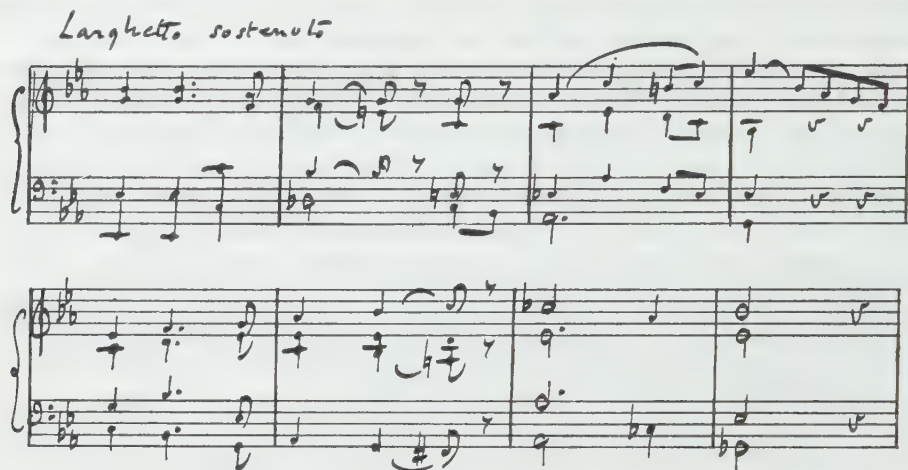
Far too much importance has been attached to the literary influences on Berlioz's music — he is often described, usually in a derogatory sense, as a literary musician. It is true that he possessed the gift, rare among musicians, of writing vivid, fluent and well-constructed prose — in particular his *Memoirs* are a work that has given delight to many besides musicians, even to many with little knowledge of music. In the librettos which he wrote for some of his vocal works, the style is tasteful and the versification highly competent. In spite of this his outlook was always that of a musician rather than of a man of letters. He was deeply interested in a few great writers, but almost entirely for the stimulus they could provide for his musical invention. Three poets in particular occupied him for the greater part of his life, Virgil, Shakespeare and Goethe. There is no doubt that the influence of Virgil was the deepest, as it was also the earliest; moreover Virgil was the only one of the three that Berlioz read in the original. A great deal that had been maturing in Berlioz all his life was finally expressed in *The Trojans*, his first and only large-scale work to be directly inspired by Virgil. His admiration for Shakespeare was passionate and wholly sincere; but it was in many ways for a Shakespeare re-created in his own image. His *Romeo and Juliet* contains much of Berlioz's most moving music, but in its structure and conception it is one of the most experimental, problematic and uneven of his works, though Romain Rolland seems to have regarded it as his masterpiece. In *Beatrice and Benedict* on the other hand, although its emotional range may be smaller (it is the least 'romantic' of all Berlioz's works), the literary subject-matter never gets out of hand. The adaptation of the stage-play for operatic

purposes is masterly; there are no loose ends and Berlioz knew how to discard whatever would have interfered with the unity of his own conception. Indeed the opera in some ways has more unity than Shakespeare's play. The attraction that Part I of Goethe's *Faust* had for Berlioz is understandable enough, but he does not seem to have had much interest in Goethe's work as a whole, and one suspects that he never read *Faust* Part II at all. His whole conception of a *Damnation* of Faust is un-Goethean. There is, however, one curious parallel between the *Damnation* and *Faust* Part I. The core of Goethe's drama is the *Urfaust*, written when he was in his early twenties; this was revised and expanded, with long intervals when the work was left aside, over a period of thirty years, before reaching its final form. Berlioz's 'Ur-Damnation' was the series of *Huit scènes de Faust* published in 1829; the *Damnation de Faust* as we know it was not finished until 1845. It is widely regarded as his most important work, I think quite wrongly; it contains perhaps half-a-dozen numbers that are among the best things he ever wrote, quite a lot that is his second best, and several numbers that are very weak indeed.

It is important to realize that Berlioz's attitude to the literary works that provided the starting-points for his compositions was not basically different from that of other great composers. The quality of his musical ideas, and his skill in their realization vary a good deal, but it is not true to say that his greater works are either less or more literary than his lesser ones; in all cases the works stand or fall by their musical qualities. The late Hamilton Harty, who did so much for Berlioz's music, in my opinion greatly overemphasized the importance of literary and pictorial tendencies in his work.

It is best to end with a discussion of various purely musical aspects of Berlioz's work, starting with his harmony which has been so often criticized. This criticism is often understandable, though partly based on misunderstanding. It is true that nearly all Berlioz's contemporaries and the composers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries regarded harmony as the most expressive element in music; it was moreover an age permeated with ideas of progress, and in music progress came to be associated principally with harmonic novelty and ever-increasing harmonic complexity. This was linked with the fact that the piano gradually came to occupy the central position in musical education held in former periods by the voice, and it is obvious that keyboard instruments, for mechanical reasons, present opportunities for harmonic experiment on an unlimited scale. Berlioz on occasion wrote strikingly original harmony, but he was not first and foremost a harmonist, as most of his contemporaries were; it is significant that he wrote little and badly for the piano, and seems to have used the instrument hardly at all as an aid in composition. In the middle of the twentieth century we are beginning to be less obsessed with harmonic idiom than we were, and Berlioz's relative conventionality in this one aspect of composition seems less important than it did. There is no point in denying that there are occasional flatnesses of harmonization on the one hand, and on the other chromatic progressions that fit in oddly with their surroundings; many of these passages sound much better on the orchestra than one would think from reading the score, or from playing the passages on the piano, but the slight feeling of awkwardness

often remains. The passage quoted here comes from the aria of Friar Laurence in *Romeo and Juliet*.



Numerous passages could be found without much difficulty in which Berlioz, like so many of his contemporaries, makes far too facile a use of diminished sevenths. In his harmony as in so much else Berlioz is most 'romantic' when he is at his weakest. But from time to time we come across passages of harmony that are very original, like the concluding bars of the *Prière* in the *Te Deum*:

Moderato

or the four different harmonizations of the words 'Salva me' at the end of the chorus 'Rex Tremendae Majestatis', in the *Requiem*, a work which contains much of Berlioz's

(p)

(♩ = 66)

sal - va me, sal - va me,

Orch: *pp*

p

sal - va me, sal - va me,

Orch: *pp*

B. *p*

T. mf

S. & A. mf

sal - va me, sal - va me, sal - va me, sal - va me,

Orch: *pp* *cresc.*

S. & A.

sal - va me sal - va me,

Orch: (*pp*) *pendendo*

most original harmony. This work and the *Childhood of Christ* both contain many passages with a strong modal flavour, and it is in these two works that one is most frequently reminded of Lesueur. In *Herod's Dream* in the *Childhood of Christ* there is a constant use of the flattened second which is very suggestive of the Phrygian mode; in the *Requiem* at the end of the first chorus there occurs this very striking cadence.

S. + A.

Kyrie eleison, eleison, eleison.

mf p

It is commonly held that Berlioz was without contrapuntal sense, and that his fugal writing is incompetent. It is true that when he writes a conventional fugue, like the *Hosanna* in the *Requiem* or the opening Chorus of the *Te Deum* the result is unimpressive, and his counterpoint of course never for a moment reminds one of Bach or Palestrina; but the same could be said about the rather unfortunate fugal efforts of Brahms. The fugue in the *Damnation* and the *Epithalamium Grotesque* in *Beatrice and Benedict* are of course parodistic; they are not perhaps among the most successful examples of Berliozian wit. There are no really outstanding examples of stretto, double and triple counterpoint and the other formal fugal devices, and the occasional use of canon (G major section of introduction to *Harold in Italy*, introduction to the *Carneval Romain* Overture) are not very impressive. What is impressive is Berlioz's use of fugal exposition and fugato; it is probably true to say that his fugal expositions are the most expressive to be found in any composer since Beethoven and the most spontaneous. This may sound a perverse and paradoxical judgment but here is a short and very incomplete list of examples; the G minor opening of *Harold in Italy*, the *Convoi Funèbre* in *Romeo and Juliet*, the March in the opening of the *Childhood of Christ*, the opening of the *Damnation of Faust*, the *Offertorium* and the *Quaerens me* in the *Requiem*. A section of the last is quoted here:

S. + A.

Quaerens me sedisti lassus, quaerens me, redemisti.

pp

Handwritten musical score for three voices (Soprano, Tenor, Bass) and piano accompaniment. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It features a polyphonic setting of a Latin text. The Soprano part begins with "cru cem pas." and "sus, cruceem". The Tenor part begins with "pas me se di sti" and "las". The Bass part begins with "tan - tus" and "sus, tan tus". The piano accompaniment provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines. The score is marked "cresc." at the end.

There is a certain distant affinity of feeling and of texture with some of the polyphonic writing of the early sixteenth century. Whenever Berlioz's fugal writing is most successful it is due to the intrinsic melodic qualities of the subject rather than to the part-writing, however personal and expressive it may be.

A great deal has been written about Berlioz's orchestration, and here his originality has always been granted. Far too much emphasis has been placed on its occasional freakishness. Berlioz was interested in exploiting and developing all the resources of all the instruments; it is quite untrue to talk as if his main interest was in producing bizarre effects, especially by employing the more unusual registers of the instruments. There are innumerable pages particularly in the later works in which the instrumental writing is absolutely 'normal' and yet in which the total impression is very personal; it is perhaps from these pages that a composer can learn the most nowadays; orchestral oddities seldom surprise us. The works of special value from this point of view are the *Childhood of Christ* and the later operas.²

Beatrice and Benedict is scored with a delicacy and economy that are truly Mozartian. From his earliest to his latest works what distinguishes his scoring is his keen sense of the individualities of the instruments and of the almost unlimited possibilities of combination and grouping; contrary to the general belief, he was much less interested in effects of mass, and in treating the orchestra as if it were a single super-instrument than was Wagner.

But eventually when one has considered Berlioz from one angle after another, it is always his melody to which one returns; it is here that he is most deeply original,

² Since the acquisition by the British Museum of the Hirsch Collection a few years ago it has become possible for the first time to study the full scores of the two parts of *The Trojans*. Astounding as it may seem, the ordinary student had no access to these scores owing to rather unusual behaviour on the part of the French publishers.

most unlike his contemporaries and successors, and least understood. His melodies are remarkable above all for their rhythmical structure; nearly all other nineteenth century composers are short-breathed by comparison, and tend to be motival rather than melodic — their melody is often very beautiful in detail, but less impressive from the point of view of the longer period. Nietzsche has been accused of ignorance, or malice, or perversity in describing Wagner as an exquisite miniaturist; there was more than a grain of truth in his remark, whereas no-one could possibly say that of Berlioz. It is much easier to quote in detail from Wagner or Chopin or Debussy in very small fragments; their originality will often show up in a two-bar phrase in the most unmistakable manner. Short quotations from Berlioz usually convey very little; the longer a fragment is the more it comes to life, and one could almost say that a fragment of sixteen bars is four times as expressive as one of eight. The late Tom Wotton wrote a very able defence of Berlioz's melody; it may be helpful here to give a small list of examples that seem to me particularly striking, though many others could have been chosen: the Introduction to the first movement of the *Symphonie Fantastique*; the slow section in A flat of the *Corsair* Overture; Cassandra's Aria in the first Act of the *Fall of Troy*, and the scene in pantomime in the second Act of the same work; the song *Sur les Lagunes*, in the cycle *Les Nuits d'Été*; the Septet in the *Trojans at Carthage*; the first movement of the *Symphonie Funèbre et Triomphale*.³ Twenty bars from the opening of this movement are quoted; it would no doubt have been easy to choose another fragment more technically perfect, but difficult to choose one more characteristic of its composer. As so often in Berlioz, the bass provides an expressive commentary on the melody, as well as supplying a simple harmonic foundation. (See opposite page.)

The aim of this article has been to suggest lines of approach for the study of the music of Berlioz. Much has been written on him, some of it admirable but too few musicians actually study the scores themselves at first-hand. It is true that the full scores of his larger works are difficult to come by and that a great deal is lost by studying the works in piano arrangements. This is rather less true of the later works than of the earlier, but even the vocal scores of these works are expensive. They are of course works of which every important public library should have a copy.

The study of Berlioz is essential above all because it can help towards the re-assessment of the music of the nineteenth century that is so much needed. It is no use trying to turn our backs on the nineteenth century; it may have sown the seeds of many of our troubles, but we are inseparably linked with it. We must try to understand it more deeply, to pay greater attention to the relatively neglected composers, and to study the more familiar ones from the less obvious angles. The new interest in the music of earlier centuries has been stimulating and valuable, but it needs to be completed by a revaluation of the nineteenth. In this revaluation the study of Berlioz should play a very great part.

³ One of the least known of all Berlioz's works, recently made available in a long-playing record. The second and third movements are not on the same level as the first.

Moderato in poco lento
Sve sempre

The musical score is written in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It consists of four systems of staves. The first system has a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The second system continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The third system features a more active vocal line and piano accompaniment. The fourth system shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The score is written in ink on aged paper.

THE TEACHING OF ELISABETH SCHUMANN

Elizabeth Puritz

Elisabeth Schumann was not an anatomical teacher. She did not explain to the pupil the function of each of the many muscles in the larynx. In fact I think she hardly knew of their existence. She was interested in two sets of muscles only: those used for breathing and those used for lip control. The vocal cords she expected to work automatically, in response to the mind and the breath. Yet she had a very perfect control of all those unnamed muscles and was able to impart this control to receptive pupils.

She spoke of the 'chimney' through which the breath flowed and produced tone. If she had spoken of an engine room, with busy levers moving in all directions, the picture would no doubt have been anatomically more correct. But I am quite convinced that the effect on the pupil would have been destructive. She aimed at reaching that relaxation which left the muscles free to obey in their natural and lawful way the dictates of the mind.

Many students say that anatomical knowledge helps them. It may be that here and there, a piece of anatomical information may become a visual conception in the student's mind, and so help him to get 'the right feeling' for a certain note or notes. But the same result could be obtained by a visual conception alone, and with less danger attached.

'Singing is breathing'. This was the alpha and omega of Elisabeth Schumann's voice production. It was the creed to which she clung, and which carried her triumphantly through all her career.

It is not easy to explain a method of breathing, without actually being able to demonstrate it; but I will try to make as clear as possible the method that Elisabeth Schumann used, and which she was convinced was the best. In the first place: whenever possible, breathe through the nose, for that ensures a deeper breath, as well as being kinder to the throat. If you have not much time, you must of course take a quick breath through the open mouth.

The breath must be a really deep one. Not the shallow, chest-filling kind that people generally take when told to breathe deeply, nor even the kind that makes the ribs expand; but the kind which you take when you are lying relaxed on your bed or when you are asleep. If you observe yourself when you are lying down, utterly relaxed, and breathing quite normally, you will find that with each breath you take, your abdominal muscles bulge out a little. This is caused by your diaphragm moving downwards.



*The last photograph of Elisabeth Schumann
Autumn 1951*



So far the breathing used for singing tallies exactly with the normal function of breathing; but now there comes a difference. It is obvious that it must be so, since in singing the breath has an extra and specialized job to perform. It must produce and sustain tone. It must have a controlled strength and it must be eked out gradually over a comparatively long period. The muscles that exercise this control are to a certain extent the abdominal muscles and to a large extent the diaphragm. Having taken your breath, you must reverse the order of things. This time it is your abdominal muscles that go in, thereby pushing the diaphragm up; the diaphragm in its turn pushing up the chest. This all happens in one movement, and instantaneously on gaining this new position, but not before, you begin to expel your breath.

Until one has tried this way of breathing oneself, it is hard to realize what an enormous difference it makes to one's singing. One feels that, apart from the effort of breathing, no effort of any kind is necessary. The voice seems to be carried on a column of supporting air. Top notes do not have to be 'reached'; the breath is there first, ready to hold them when you lay them gently on it. Towards the end of a long and difficult phrase, the voice does not get strained and throaty, it remains relaxed, cushioned, confidently and happily on its pillar of air.

How important it is to have a dependable method of breathing, becomes clear when one realizes what an essential part of singing it is. 'Singing is breathing' . . . This is easy to say but not always easy to grasp. Hardly ever does one find a pupil who sings without any throat effort at all, whose breath simply flows into the resonance cavities — breath, the active agent, flowing into the passive agents.

The breath should be regarded as the only active agent in singing, apart from the mind. It is the mind that causes the vocal cords to adjust themselves according to the pitch and concentration required, and the breath which, in its contact with them, produces tone. Of course it could not manage on its own, without the help of vocal cords and resonance cavities; but they must be looked upon merely as recipients. They must receive but never give.

The passive agents in singing.

It is difficult to compare the voice with any one particular type of musical instrument, as it does not fit exactly into any of the categories. Nevertheless, the more one can think of it as an instrument, the nearer one will come to faultless production. One speaks of instrumental voices, and that is a description which has often been given to Elisabeth Schumann's voice.

I find it easiest to think of the voice as a tube-shaped wind instrument with membranes inside the tube, and at the end of it, a resonance box such as string instruments have. From your lungs you blow (as into a wind instrument) through your throat (this is the tube of the wind instrument). The breath sets the vocal cords in vibration (these are the membranes), and the resultant sound waves fill the mouth, nasal and head cavities (the resonance box).

I feel sure that this comparison would not stand up to scientific criticism. It is merely an instinctive picture, built on all that Elisabeth Schumann explained to me about singing. As she herself taught by instinct and feeling, rather than by an analysis of anatomical and physical laws, I should not be fulfilling my purpose if I tried to do otherwise.

If you think of the voice in this instrumental way, it becomes obvious that all physical exertion can be left to the breath alone. The tube of the instrument and the resonance box remain passive recipients. They cannot change their shape nor exert themselves physically in any way. And if they could do so, the carefully planned balance of the instrument would be disturbed, to the detriment of tone quality and resonance. This is what Elisabeth Schumann meant when she called the throat a chimney. She looked upon it as an immovable, unalterable passage, through which the breath passed.

The curious instrument that I have constructed as a parallel to the human voice lacks two vital things. In fact, as I have described it, it could only produce one note: there is no means of producing vowels and consonants, and there are no stops to determine the pitch of the note.

The reason why we need no stops, and yet can pitch the note exactly as we require it, is a fascinating and all-important one. One might say it is because the vocal cords are able to adjust their tension, length and thickness, according to the pitch required. But it would not be good tactics to think of it in this way. We should then be making the vocal cords active instead of passive agents, and how then could we continue to think of the throat as a chimney only, if active work were going on inside it?

The answer is that the mind determines the pitch of the voice. The vocal cords must respond passively to the combined agents, mind and breath. And they will respond most obediently to the slightest nuance, if not prevented by troublesome behaviour on the part of the larynx. That is why it is all-important, firstly: that the throat really remains a chimney, that is to say utterly relaxed, so that no cramping or distortion can take place; and secondly: that the two active agents, mind and breath, are most careful as to the orders they give.

The mind has an even more exacting task than the breath, for the working of the breath can become automatic, but the mind must be ever vigilant. Without the mind it would be impossible to keep a single note in tune. Not only the pitch, but also the degree of concentration, the colouring and even the placing of the notes are determined by the mind. The conception of a note as concentrated and pointed will prevent it being breathy and spread, everything else being equal. A mental picture of sombreness and gloom will automatically darken a note and a joyous picture lighten it, and the visualization of the correct place for a note, will cause the sound beams to impinge there. The passive agents are always obedient so long as they are allowed to remain passive. But try to concentrate, darken, lighten or place a note by means of muscular effort, and you will defeat your own purpose.

The breath, as an active agent, has also a large burden of responsibility. It must always be there and it must always be moving. In addition, as a kind of second-in-command of the mind, it must adjust its speed and its pressure according to the requirements of the note and phrase. The vocal cords are utterly at its mercy, and cannot be expected to do their job efficiently if they are not treated with consideration. The breath must caress them, not blast at them.

It is really best to forget the vocal cords, as one certainly does in speaking. They are just the membranes of the musical instrument which are set in vibration by mind and breath. Yet I think it does one good to bear in mind the fact that all one's notes are produced there, be they high or low, *piano* or *forte*. The difficulties associated with high or very low notes are to a large extent due to a false mental picture. One imagines that one must reach up to a high note and down to a low one. I understand that there are certain fluctuations in the position of the larynx, but it is far the best to imagine it, enclosing as it does the vocal cords, always in the same place, about half way down the throat. It is good to touch that spot in the front of one's throat and to say: 'this is where all my notes are produced. I need not climb up some pinnacle to reach a high note, nor descend into an abyss for a low one. I can relax and stay just where I was for all the other notes and where too I produce my speaking voice.'

For this reason it is helpful, when a pupil cannot get rid of the idea of height, and sings in consequence with larynx raised, to tell him just to speak and let the breath do the singing. Which is the same as saying: let the diaphragm do the singing. He feels then that all the hard work is being done down below, far from the ever-ready-to-tighten throat, and the vowels and consonants are being effortlessly produced at lip-level, where in fact they must stay, whatever the height of the note.

I mentioned before that vowels and consonants were not catered for in my imaginary voice instrument. Consonants must be spat off at lip-level. They must seem to have no connexion with the rising flow of breath and tone. In order to get them well out of the way of the tone you should, as Elisabeth Schumann put it, spit them out half-an-hour before the tone begins. It would not be good to take this advice too literally, but it is surprising how comparatively large a gap one can leave between consonant and tone, without it being at all noticeable to a listener. This is a specially useful trick on high notes. Consonants that you can hum into, such as *m* and *n*, needless to say do not need to be separated in this way.

The vowels must respond, to quite a large extent, to the mind. But there is also a contrivance that we can fit onto our instrument in the same way that different end-pieces can be fixed on a Hoover, and which form the vowels very neatly without any danger of throat effort. This contrivance is the lips.

I use the comparison with the Hoover purposely, because the neck of the Hoover remains unchanged whatever end-piece is fixed on to it, and that is the way you must think of the throat in its treatment of vowels. You must feel that breath only (translated into sound) passes up through the throat. Vowels and consonants have no part in that upward flow of breath and sound. They are merely the result of the

contrivance fastened on the outside end of the main tube. If you tried to produce a vowel shape earlier, somewhere down in the throat, or at the back of the mouth, the tone would be half-strangled at birth.

Although one cannot emphasize enough the fact that the throat must remain a chimney, in which one is conscious of nothing active taking place, there is a moment when the vocal cords must, as it were, stand at attention. That is the moment which is a split second before the breath reaches them and produces tone. Although one should look upon them as passive agents only, they should nevertheless not be taken unawares. Shortly before a note is produced, the mind tells them how they must adjust themselves in order to produce the required pitch, and immediately they must be 'tuned in', ready to receive the breath. It is essential to do this tuning-in without the least stiffening of any throat muscles. The throat must remain, as always, only a chimney.

When constructing the resonance box of a musical instrument, the most perfect form for resonance is chosen, and this form remains unchangeable, a passive box, receiving sound. It is the same with the resonance cavities of the voice. There are various cavities: mouth, nasal and head. But it is far better to think of them all as one box, into which the breath (as sound) is poured — upward like the jet of a fountain or like rising smoke. Again, the box must first be carefully formed. Its shape will determine the shape of the note and the vowel.

One of the things that most distinguished Elisabeth Schumann's singing was surely the noble shape of her vowels. 'I hate these white notes', she often said; and, whatever the character of the song she sang, the perfection of her line was never once interrupted by a flattened vowel. She made her 'box' ready, dome-shaped, and it retained this shape whatever vowel or note she was singing.

Some faces, like Elisabeth Schumann's, are ideally built to form this dome-shaped box, but even those that are not can be 'remodelled' to more or less the right shape. Until the correct position has become automatic, it is a very good idea to practise singing always in front of a mirror.

There are three main points about the correct position. The cheek bones should be lifted, the upper lip should be held against the gums and teeth, and the mouth opening should be oval, not square. Of course you cannot really lift your cheek bones, but you can move the muscles of the cheeks in such a way that it feels and looks as though they were lifted, and this helps to get the dome-like shape, without any inside changes. As soon as you try to form your dome deliberately, by lifting your soft palate or flattening your tongue, the tone will be stiff and plummy and the note will seem to stick to the inside of your mouth, instead of floating freely.

There are many views about how lips should be held. I learned with my previous teachers to curl my upper lip up in a smile, to pull it down to cover my teeth, and to protrude both lips like a funnel. Elisabeth Schumann did none of these things.

She just left her upper lip where it normally was when in repose, but kept it stuck with gentle firmness against gums and teeth, the chief control being on the eye teeth.

Another way of getting the dome shape is to try and form what Elisabeth Schumann called a beak. She was in any case convinced that the more one could make oneself feel and look like a bird, the better one would be able to sing, and she said that one must form one's upper jaw into a beak which protruded over the lower jaw. This cannot be done by just pushing the lower jaw in; one must definitely feel as though one were sticking the upper jaw out, as if, for example, to bite into an apple. This protruding beak and the head cavities behind, form the finished resonance box, into which the tone is poured.

Many teachers give their pupils no instruction at all as to what to do with their lips, or tell them to leave their mouths just 'natural'. But a tautness of the upper lip is just as essential for good tone as is the tautness of the drum skin. One must only take care not to let other muscles of the face or in the mouth stiffen in sympathy.

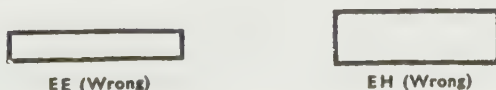
There is not nearly such a difference in the shape of the mouth for different vowels as one is apt to imagine. All shapes are only slight variations on the oval shape of AH; and the higher the note, the more uniform the mouth position for all vowels becomes. In the diagram below I have given the approximate mouth position for the notes E flat and E (top space, treble clef).



It is important to note that all vowel shapes, even the thin vowels EE and EH are long, rather than broad. The thinness of a vowel must be thought of vertically rather than horizontally. On very high notes there is no difference in the various vowel shapes at all, and it is left to the mind alone to make the small adjustment necessary for a change from one vowel to another. Elisabeth Schumann said:

'From high G onwards I sing only AH. It is sufficient for me to think, for example, EE for the note to sound like an EE.' In any case she always demanded a *ü* or French 'u' sound in EE.

If you sing an EE or an EH with a mouth position as in the diagram below,



as many people do, a white, hard and utterly undome-like sound is the result. And if you do the same thing with a more open mouth for higher notes,



EE or EH (Wrong)

it is impossible to keep the note pure and concentrated.

Not only the shape, but also the size of the mouth opening is most important. It is just as wrong to open too much on a low or middle note as to open too little on a high one. One should never open the slightest bit more than one feels the note requires. How much that is, in the case of each individual note, can only be learned by experience. One must listen and one must feel: How much does that note need to give it a perfect shape and full concentration? Generally it is far less than one thinks, and even high notes do not need huge gaping mouths. Any note, even a high one, can be actually sounded without opening the mouth at all. The high note is not a great bulky lump that can only be got out by opening everything its widest. But it has a tremendous amount of overtones, and they can ring more happily in a proportionately sized resonance box. The tone is merely beautified, not produced, by the correct mouth opening.

On low notes, though the opening between the lips is small for slim-shaped vowels, the jaws must not be too close together. Elisabeth Schumann's test was to place her little finger sideways between her teeth.

This means that when singing OO or EE on a low note, the lip opening is smaller than the actual mouth opening. If you were to open the lips more, you would produce an O rather than an OO, an EH rather than an EE; but if you were to close your jaws to suit the lip opening, the note would have a clenched-teeth sound about it.

Then there is the tongue. No one could be more emphatic about how severely the tongue must be left alone than Elisabeth Schumann. Any attempt to hold it in a special position produces a fatal stiffness. 'If you relax your throat entirely and breathe properly, the breath will regulate the tongue, as it does the soft palate,' she said. But there is no avoiding some tongue control for EE's and similar thin vowels. She made one practise this in speaking, in front of a mirror. When speaking AH, the tongue lies in a normal, relaxed position, the point touching the bottom of the teeth. For EE, the point dips down vertically, still against the teeth, causing the front part of the tongue to rise somewhat and broaden out sideways. This is not at all difficult to learn and can be practised without singing or even speaking.

Apart from this one exercise, the tongue is far better left to itself. Students are continually being taught to flatten their tongue and raise their soft palate. Elisabeth Schumann was most violently opposed to both of these practices:

'If you do it yourself, you will overdo it,' she said, 'the breath must blow against the soft palate and lift it like a sail. It will lift it just the amount necessary and no more, and will regulate the tongue.'

What will it not regulate? Indeed, once the resonance box is ready and the upper lip prepared, one can leave everything to the breath — and of course the mind.

Getting the resonance box ready includes having the proper mouth-opening prepared. Everything in fact must be ready simultaneously with the taking of breath: the mind, willing the right pitch and concentration, the vocal cords tuning themselves to it, the resonance box and the mouth-opening in position, the throat relaxed, and then, as Elisabeth Schumann always said: 'Get a shock!'

She meant by that, the brisk inward jerk of abdomen and diaphragm, which precedes the tone by a split second. The preparation of the whole 'instrument' must be simultaneous with the 'shock'.

Elisabeth Schumann told me that many fellow singers used to have difficulty in attacking the 'Ach', which is the first word of Pamina's aria in the *Magic Flute*. 'They got nervous', she said, 'and nearly always started with a wobble. But I always just 'got a shock', and the note was there and did not wobble.'

Placing of Notes

To talk of 'placing a note' is somewhat misleading. You place a cup on the table, or a chair in the middle of the room. Any action of this kind involves muscular effort, and involuntarily one feels that a similar effort is required for 'placing a note'. With one's throat muscles, perhaps also with one's tongue, one endeavours to push the note to the place which is considered ideal by the teacher. It is quite clear that this is not compatible with keeping the throat utterly relaxed; and, apart from that, it is not at all necessary. A directive from the mind, and the upward push of the breath, is all that is needed to make the note 'land' in the right place.

It is perhaps because one is not quite clear about what exactly it is that has to be placed, that the difficulties arise. Seeking to find head resonance, one tries to put a whole word — not only tone, but vowel and consonant — into the head. But neither vowels nor consonants can possibly be produced in the head. They can and must remain always at lip level, while the tone, a direct continuation of the breath, is soaring upwards into the cavities and impinging just there where its particular pitch requires.

One must learn to separate these two functions in singing, and to have the sensation of comfortably 'speaking' the text, while the breath sends the tone spinning up on a far distant journey of its own. The reward, when one has succeeded, is paradoxical: tone and text appear to the listener to be inextricably bound together, and yet every word can be easily understood. Each is happiest on its own. The tone prefers to soar, untrammelled by the words; and the words can best make themselves understood if they stay in their accustomed place and pay no heed to

the tone. If it is impossible to understand a singer's words, in spite of obvious efforts on his part, you can be pretty sure that he is trying to do the impossible, that is, to place the words on the same level as the tone.

Really, then, one could say that each note has two places: the place where it finds its resonance, and the never-changing place where the vowels are 'spoken'. And there is a third, rather indefinable place, in which it has its root. It is a revealing and surprising fact that, the higher a note is, the deeper one feels its root to be.

These three places, top, middle and root, give the note a longish, oval shape, which becomes elongated still more on the higher notes. Elisabeth Schumann used to talk of the voice being 'deep', and she meant by this, that sensation of the notes having their roots deep in the chimney, which is how they feel when the larynx is in a comfortably deep and balanced position. She said that her voice sometimes became really 'deep' only after she had been singing for some while. So this position of perfect comfort has to be deliberately cultivated even by great singers. It cannot be achieved by sheer force. One cannot just ram the notes down into one's throat and hold them there. But rather one must let them drop; and a most helpful conception is that under each note there is a bottomless pit, over which it is, not fixed, but loosely suspended. The bulk of the note is felt always in the upper jaw; one sings, as it were, with the 'beak', and it is only that intangible thing, the root of the note, which is felt below the level of the mouth.

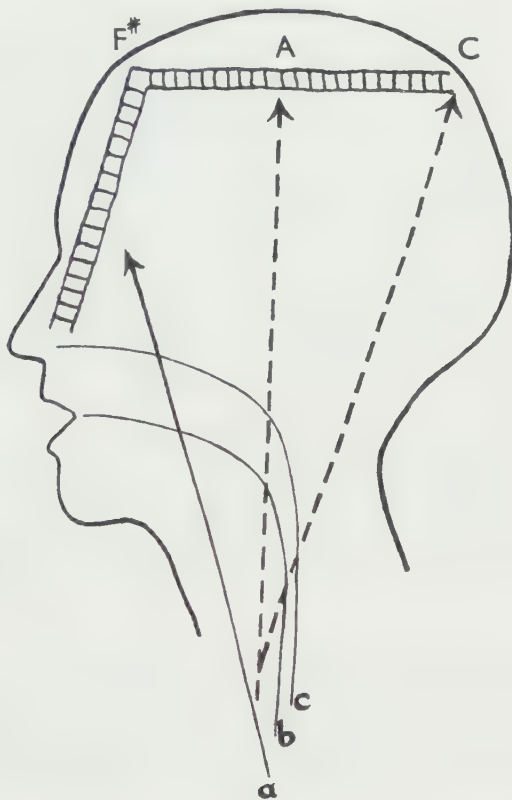
Even though, all else being equal, a note will find its own place, it is nevertheless a great help to know beforehand exactly where that place is, and to direct the tone, mentally, towards it.

Imagine a ladder up the back of the nose and forehead. A ladder on which to ascend and descend when singing a scale, each rung constituting a different note. If one could see these rungs, in the same way as one sees the notes of the piano, it would certainly simplify matters. But besides being invisible to us, they are so closely packed together that one could not even make a diagram showing the position of each. They cannot be divided up mathematically, any more than can the strings of a violin, and the singer, like the violinist, must learn to feel and to gauge exactly the place for each note.

The ladder begins at the back and fairly near to the bottom of the nose, and leads straight up to the top of the forehead. All notes which are sung with head resonance, up to F or F# on the fifth line, must find their place on that ladder. F#, at the top of the forehead, is the bridge over which the voice slips onto another ladder, at right angles to the first, leading from the forehead to the back of the head. G, a semitone higher, is the first note to ring entirely in the head. It is the first of a series of notes which leave all nasal resonance behind, and ring out, it almost seems, in the celestial spheres. When properly produced, they feel and sound as though they had lost all connexion with the singer and were floating free in the air. The ladder for these high notes is not nearly so closely packed as the front one, and high C has its place already right at the back of the head. (See diagram on opposite page.)

Elisabeth Schumann told me that she once asked Caruso where he felt his high C. He answered that he felt it on the ground behind him; which shows, not only how far back but also how 'deep' he felt it.

The very high, coloratura notes seem to make a law of their own, for they switch back and are felt at the top of the forehead.



The front ladder, to a certain extent, justifies the saying that the voice must be placed forward. But the actual direction of the tone, as I have marked it with arrow 'a' in the diagram, is much more upward than forward. It is as though the tone, on its upward flight, scraped past the front ladder, helping itself to nasal resonance on the way to the head. The two arrows, 'b' and 'c', show a false conception of the forward position. They make the tone turn a corner, and in the case of arrow 'b', go straight out of the mouth, which means that the note will sound flat and straight. If it follows arrow 'c', the sound will be thin and nasal. Neither of them can have the ringing quality of the upward soaring note.

As to the notes on the top ladder; by no possible conception could they be called 'forward'. They are upward, and as they get higher still, backward. It is not wise, however, to emphasize this backward position too much with beginners; until

they have learned to carry their voice entirely with their breath, there is a danger of it falling back on to the throat, in which case they will certainly start forcing.

If each note were to sound only there where it is placed, that is to say, where the core of its sound beam impinges, it would, however well placed, be rather a sorry affair. Thinking of it as round or oval-shaped, 'a mouth full of sound' as Elisabeth Schumann used to say, is one big step towards giving it body. But shape alone is not sufficient; it must also have texture, and the thicker the texture, the more thrilling it will sound. If it were to take its resonance only from the contact with the hard palate, it would no doubt sound clear and bright, but it would be a note with one layer of resonance only; its texture would be comparable to bone or ivory. But the 'resonance box' is constructed to produce a far more complex and beautiful tone. Over the layer of ivory there is a layer of fine metal (the nasal resonance), and over this, a covering of velvet (the front head resonance). It is hard to find a comparison for the back head resonance, since the high notes that sound there appear to be dematerialised, free from all physical bonds, just sound waves floating in the ether.

These various layers of resonance, which make up the texture of a note, must be assiduously cultivated. This is also a part of placing the voice, and it is the real meaning of the expression, 'to put the voice in the head'.

Elisabeth Schumann often stressed that one must aim the notes against the hard parts of the head: that is to say, the hard palate and even the teeth, rather than the soft palate. But this hard surface, the ivory layer, must pass its vibrations on to the outer layers of fine metal and velvet. All possibilities of resonance, inside and above the mouth, must be used to the full. There are various ways of achieving this fullness of tone, and one definite way of *not* doing it, namely: by muscular effort of the throat and mouth.

Primarily it is, as always, the mind, which, through visualizing the best spot for the sound beam to land, guides it there. We are not able to control the vocal cords directly, and so we must do it through the rather roundabout way of visualizing, not only the pitch, but also the place of the note. Provided we have visualized both correctly, the vocal cords will adjust themselves, and, receiving the breath, produce a perfect note.

One might compare the notes to remote-controlled missiles; in which case the breath would be the force that shoots them off, and the mind, conscious of the correct place for each note, would control at base by means of an automatic device: the vocal cords.

Curiously enough, it needs a certain courage to stay in what appears to be the confined space of the front ladder. After a certain height has been reached, you feel that you must make room for the notes. You start stretching, and consequently tightening, the inside of your mouth and your throat. This means that you have left the narrow confines of the ladder, and are spreading yourself out, with the uncomfortable feeling that soon there will be no more room to which to spread. There is only one way of avoiding this predicament, and that is to go blindly on up

the ladder, opening nothing, making no room whatever, but trusting implicitly in the breath. The tone will pierce its way through to the resonance cavities, slim and concentrated; all the more beautiful for having been left to find its own path.

Like a painter, choosing and mixing his colours, the singer can choose the texture for his notes according to what music and words require. He may sometimes feel that a passage or just one word, requires the gentle sweetness of head resonance only, whereas another needs rather the quality of metal, to lend it dramatic force, or it asks for brightness of tone and crystal clearness. These are, of course, nuances of interpretation, and, generally speaking, one will try to put the full texture into each note and to keep a uniform line. The type of voice will also determine which particular texture will generally predominate.

The notes on the top ladder cannot be placed by humming into a consonant, or such nasal devices. Their place can best be found by following uniformly and without a break from one ladder to the other, as in a scale or arpeggio. They will fall then naturally into their proper place, and this place one must endeavour to memorize, for future use. Generally speaking, G goes straight up to the front and top of the head (not forehead), A hits the middle top of the head, B flat slants already towards the back, and C is right at the back of the head. Here again, as in the front ladder, it is quite useless to try and make room for the notes. They pierce their way through to the outer head resonance, without any stretching or lifting inside the mouth and throat. The less one tries to make room for them, the more effortlessly will they reach the heights; provided, of course, that the breath gives them sufficient support. There is a considerable pressure of breath underlying the high notes, but it is, so to speak, a reserve force, of which only the minimum necessary is let through at a time. The breath must be a gentle power.

Having declared that each note has its own unalterable place, the question arises as to whether the place remains the same, regardless of the vowel. Every singer naturally aims at getting all his vowels as much in line as possible; yet certain vowels, notably the open ones, such as AH, AW, and EH, seem inclined to fall into a more backward position. Elisabeth Schumann declared quite emphatically that all vowels had exactly the same place:

‘There exists no other place for that note!’

I so often heard her say this. And she would demonstrate it by singing a number of vowels in succession, keeping them perfectly in line. The discrepancy which one feels, and which some teachers affirm to exist, is, I believe, in the *bulk* of the vowel. The ‘core’ of every vowel is in exactly the same place. Narrow vowels, such as oo and ee, do not, by their very nature, fill up as much of the mouth cavity, and therefore do not spread out so far away from their headquarters on the ladder. They have height and depth but little bulk, and one feels their place very exactly. One feels that same place during the split-second attack on a broader vowel, such as AH; but the note spreads out immediately, to fill the more roomy vowel shape. It fills the mouth, right back to the throat, and the concentrated point where it was attacked, the ‘core’, loses for the moment its significance, and one has the sensation of a less

forward position. For this reason it is sometimes necessary, when one wishes a note to have a predominantly 'heady' sound and to remain very much in line with the rest of the phrase, to close the vowel a little.

With some vowels it is easier than with others to keep the voice 'deep', and some are easier than others to sing with head resonance. One vowel must help the other. The vowel oo is well known to have the deepest natural position. Not only this, but owing to its narrow shape it fairly easily finds head resonance. It has, however, one weak spot: it is inclined, just because of its narrowness, to be cramped or squashed. Pupils who imagine their oo too far down, block up their throat and produce a stiff and hooting sound. And here the use of ah is useful: precede the oo sound with ah, keeping the 'chimney' completely unaltered as you move from ah to oo, and changing only the shape of the lips, and the oo will remain as free and loose as the ah. Or you can take it the other way round, singing first the oo and then the ah, which will help to give the ah both head resonance and depth.

Then there is ee, which, though it needs a good deal of coaxing to give it depth, is most useful for finding head and nasal resonance. 'Put an ee into it', Elisabeth Schumann used to say, often to somewhat perplexed and uncomprehending students, who thought she meant the English e as in 'let'. What she really meant was that, when singing other vowels, one should imagine that one was singing ee. This immediately has the effect of giving the note more intensity and timbre.

The ee vowel, in its turn, is similarly dependent on others. It needs to be reminded by the ah that it may not close up or tighten the chimney just because it is a thin vowel. A thin vowel does not mean that the flow of sound must be thin. Primarily it is merely tone, flowing with the formlessness of smoke through the ever-open chimney. A slight change of tongue and lip position will give it its individual vowel shape. One must take the good points of each vowel, to help towards the general perfection of them all, and if one particular vowel is easiest for an individual pupil, that is the one which can best be taken as a starting point for the rest. Never forget, however, that the vowel itself is never either 'deep' or 'high', nor does it vary its position according to the pitch of the note, but remains always there where it is spoken: at lip level, held in the frame of the lips.

MESSIAEN—A PROVISIONAL STUDY

David Drew

Olivier Messiaen was born in 1908 in Avignon, the son of Pierre Messiaen, a Shakespearian scholar, and the poetess Cécile Sauvage. He began studying the piano and composition at the age of eight, and in 1919 entered the Conservatoire at Paris, where he studied the organ under Marcel Dupré, theory under Maurice Emmanuel, and composition under Paul Dukas. In 1926 he won the first prize in counterpoint and fugue, and during the next four years he was awarded other first prizes in piano accompaniment, organ playing, improvisation, music history, and composition. In 1931, he was appointed organist at the Great Organ of Holy Trinity, Paris—a post that he still holds. The first of his works to be published (at the instigation of Dukas) were the eight Preludes for Piano, of 1929. They appeared in an edition of 500 copies in 1930. During the thirties, his music was little played, but his name became known as the leader of a group of composers which called itself, on the example of Berlioz, *La Jeune France*. The members of the group issued a manifesto in which they declared that their music was in reaction to the 'hard, mechanical, and impersonal conditions of modern life'. The group also dedicated itself to the dissemination of music that was 'youthful, free, and as far removed from revolutionary as from academic formulas'. In 1936—the same year as the foundation of *La Jeune France*—Messiaen was appointed professor at the *Ecole Normale* in Paris, and at the *Schola Cantorum*. He held these posts until his enlistment at the outbreak of war. In 1940 he was taken prisoner, and was sent to a camp in Silesia. He was later repatriated, and on his return was made professor of harmony at the Paris Conservatoire. By the end of the war Messiaen had emerged as one of the dominating figures in French music. His researches in rhythm and timbre made him much sought after as a teacher by the more advanced of younger composers, and among his pupils have been such men as Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Karel Goeyvaerts, and Michel Fano. The success of his *Trois Petites Liturgies* in 1946, made his name known throughout Europe, and some of his earlier works—notably the four Meditations for orchestra, *L'Ascension*—were discovered and brought before the public. It is significant that his *Hymne* for orchestra, written in 1932, was not given its first performance until 1947 (in New York, under the baton of Stokowsky). In 1946, Messiaen received his first important commission—for a Symphonic work, from the Koussevitzky Foundation. A year later his appointment as harmony professor at the Conservatoire was changed to that of Professor of aesthetics, rhythmic studies, and of the analysis class. Since that date he has also been engaged in writing an exhaustive treatise on rhythm, occidental and oriental.

It is customary, in an article of this kind, to preface one's remarks with a general evaluation of the composer in question, after which one may attempt to 'situate' him historically. With Messiaen, however, there are so many pitfalls that one is forced to take a quite different path. Therefore I will avoid any preliminary evaluation; the only claim to attention I will make at this point is implicit in the biographical facts recorded above. These facts indicate that Messiaen's career has been that of a distinguished and influential musician, and they seem to me to be sufficient excuse for the present study.

It is undeniable that at the moment, Messiaen's aesthetic is highly unfashionable. Now fashion may influence us all, whether we like it or not; but no-one has dared to suggest that it is a reliable yardstick for judging a work of art. I cannot therefore see any reason why it should stand between us and a serious consideration of Messiaen's artistic achievement. But we should remember that it makes true critical balance difficult to achieve. Because of this, I feel justified in reversing the procedure normally adopted in discussing the work of a creative artist.

THE LANGUAGE AND AESTHETIC

Je suis avant tout un musicien catholique. Toutes mes œuvres, religieuses ou non, sont un acte de foi et glorifient le Mystère du Christe . . . MESSIAEN

It is characteristic of Messiaen that in speaking about his methods in his book *Technique de mon Langage Musicale*,¹ he should go to great inconvenience in order that his rhythmic innovations should be thoroughly treated before he turns to questions of harmony or melody. The result is that the book is somewhat obscure at first reading; but at the very least it makes clear that the world of rhythm is his primary preoccupation. However, in the present resumé, it will be more logical to deal with harmony and melody first, since Messiaen's rhythmic innovations are the direct outcome of a harmonic crisis that has developed in his music since the early 1930's.

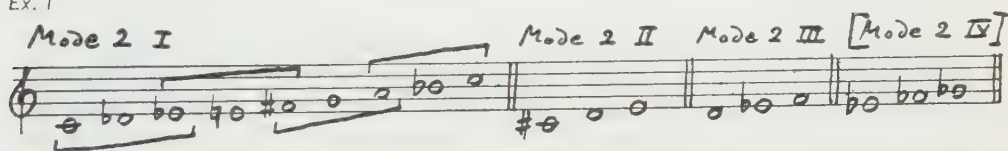
The music of Messiaen is consistently modal or polymodal. But the modes which he employs have no connexion with any of the great modal systems—whether of the East, or of ancient Greece, or of the Middle Ages. They are indeed something of his own devising, to which he has given the name *modes à transpositions limitées*. These modes are chromatic, and are founded on the twelve-note scale of our tempered system. They are composed of a number of similar note-groups, the last note of one being also the first note of the next. The relationship between the notes in each group determines the nature of the mode of which it is the component part. It stands to reason that since each mode consists of a number of internal transpositions, the entire mode can only be transposed a limited number of times, after which it returns, enharmonically, to the same notes as the original form.

¹ *Technique de mon Langage Musicale* by Olivier Messiaen. Alphonse Leduc, Paris, 1946. Needless to say, I am much indebted to this revealing self-analysis, and in particular owe to it the choice of example 5A.

The first 'mode of limited transposition' is the whole-tone scale, which involves six interlinked groups of two notes apiece, and which can be transposed once. For Messiaen, this mode has little attraction. The harmony it implies lacks the tension which he requires, and in any case, the potentialities of the scale have already been fully exploited. The only feature that recommends it, as far as Messiaen is concerned, is the prevalence of his favoured interval, the tritone. On the rare occasions on which he has used this mode, it has almost always been in conjunction with other modes. In consequence its identity is obscured and its significance quite changed. A remarkable example of this occurs during the course of the eighth movement of the *Turangalila-Symphonie* (sections 17, 31, and 34) where 'cellos and double basses enunciate a lengthy phrase that clammers slowly up the whole-tone scale, and in some almost chemical way seems to precipitate the central (alien) harmony, giving it special form, colour and clarity.

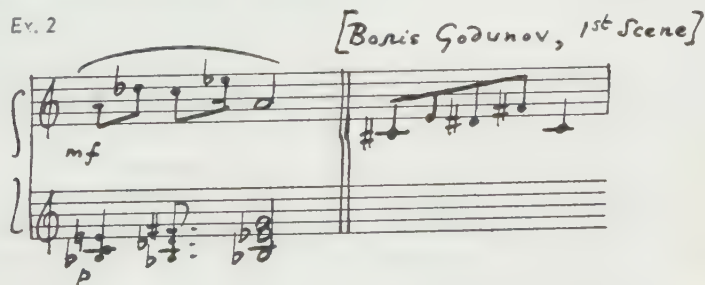
Like the whole-tone scale, Messiaen's second mode is not unfamiliar. We find it used, intermittently and unconsciously, in certain works by Scriabin, Ravel, Bartok and others. The unit is of three notes, involving the interval-succession tone semitone. Here is the mode, and the first 'group' of each of its transpositions:

Ex. 1



There are, then, three profitable transpositions. The fourth merely gives us the same notes as the second, the fifth as the third, and so on. With this mode, as with all others, Messiaen associates certain characteristic harmonies, and certain melodic or cadential formulae. The most important of the latter recurs with disconcerting frequency in his music, from *L'Ascension* of 1934 to the *Messe de Pentecôte* of 1950. It usually appears in the same, or similar, harmonic terms, and it clearly has some very special mystical significance for the composer, however un-mystically he may claim its derivation from *Boris Godunov*.

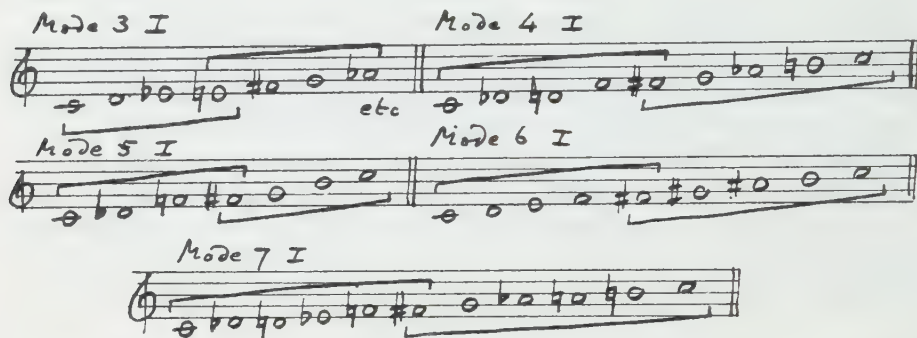
Ex. 2



There is only one other mode of strictly *limited* transposition. This contains three four-note groups, and is four times transposable. Four other modes, each divided into two groups, are transposable six times. These complete the series of

chromatic modes used by Messiaen. It is mathematically impossible to find other modes which obey the same structural laws. Others which appear to do so, reveal on closer examination that they are merely different aspects of one of the seven modes. For instance, a mode on C, starting C, D, E flat; E flat, F, G flat, is nothing more than an enharmonic cross-section of mode 2 (III). Here, then, are the remaining modes.

Ex. 3



Messiaen uses the last four modes with less frequency than the others, partly because they are not so rich in musical potentialities, and partly because he prefers the limited field imposed by modes with fewer transpositions. The attraction of this limitation he describes as 'the charm of impossibilities'. As we shall see, this concept invades his rhythmic as well as his harmonic thinking.

Already we find ourselves dealing with matters on the borderline between music and metaphysics. Let us therefore retreat to a point from which we can examine the purely musical purpose and effect of these modes. The composer's own words are here particularly valuable. The modes, he writes, 'exist in an atmosphere of several tonalities at once, *without polytonality*—the composer being at liberty either to give predominance to one tonality, or to leave the tonal feeling fluid'.

In practice, Messiaen's use of these modes has a more radical outcome than this analysis might lead one to suppose. Granted, in all but his most recent works, the existence of a tonal centre is very apparent. But the feeling of a dominant which is a *sine qua non* of tonality, is often absent from Messiaen's music. Admittedly there is a persistent emphasis on the degree a diminished fifth away from the tonic or final. But we cannot regard this as a substitute dominant—as we sometimes can with Scriabin and Bartok—for it has no true cadential function. The root progressions $V\flat-I$ or $I-V\flat$ are no more to be found than the traditional half-close or full-close; and where a melodic part moves a diminished fifth to the tonic at cadential points, it is really no more than a decoration of a tonic already established.

Since Messiaen thus systematically undermines any cadential impulse, the music has no tendency to progress, in the conventional sense. The tonic is like a ring to which the harmony is attached. The modes are like an immensely long rope that allows it to rove across a wide field, whilst all the time imposing a certain

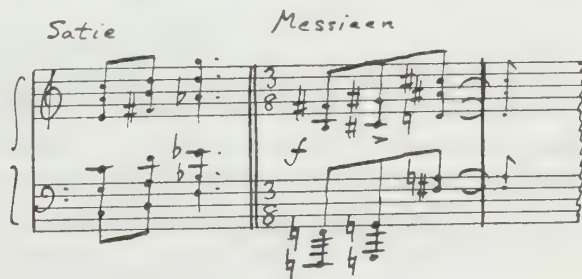
constraint. (Obviously the modes allow a great variety of chromatic chords that may be clearly related to one tonal pole.) The composer is thus able to juxtapose chords that have only the remotest diatonic relationship to one another, with the result that whilst the music is externally in a state of what one might call tonal catalepsy, internally it is in constant motion. The situation is paradoxical; perhaps it is easier to understand if we regard the tonality as being at once ubiquitous and unchanging—a state of affairs that may be justifiably regarded as an allegory for the Divine Order.

In the works of his early and middle period, Messiaen tended to emphasize this tonal fluidity by using successions of triads in root position or inversion. (See example 5A.) This is a common device in modern music, having been used by Moussorgsky (in the monastery cell scene in *Boris*, p. 49 *et seq.*, Chester's vocal score), Vaughan Williams (*Mass* and *Pastoral Symphony*), Stravinsky, Copland, and many others. However, Messiaen's free use of the triad is closer in spirit to that of Satie, in the works of his 'Rose Croix' period. Particularly relevant are the first two of Satie's *Sonneries de la Rose Croix*, and the last two items of the *Messe des Pauvres* (*Prière des Orgues*, and *Commune qui mundi nefas*). It is illuminating to compare the use of the triad in these works with the same feature in such pieces of Messiaen's as the Prelude *Les Sons Impalpables du Rêve*, the organ pieces *Les Enfants de Dieu* and *Les Bergers*, and the songs *Action de Grâce*, and *Ta Voix*. The fact that in the Messiaen examples the harmonic thinking is consistently heterophonic does not lessen the affinity with Satie; one may even find a faint precedent for this heterophony in the behaviour of the bass in Satie's *Prière des Orgues*.

To illustrate these remarks adequately in music type would be too lengthy an operation; but the extract (5B) from the minute *Dixit Domine* in Satie's *Messe* may suggest that there is indeed some affinity between the two composers. Note especially the $I \rightarrow V\flat \rightarrow I$ structure of the harmony.²

The important difference between Satie and Messiaen where triadic harmony is concerned is that whereas Messiaen considers himself bound within one tonal orbit, Satie wanders with complete freedom—often ending in a key very remote from that in which he started. Would it be fanciful to ascribe this difference to the Absolute Faith of one composer and the partial cynicism of the other? I think not. But these matters are purely speculative.

² The harmonic affinities between Messiaen and Satie are not limited to triadic harmony. By way of example, here is another progression from Satie's *Messe*, and one from Messiaen's *Visions de l'Amen*.



It will be appreciated from the above remarks that modulation plays little part in Messiaen's music,³ and conventional progressions still less. Certainly there are movements and even whole works that are almost academic in their tonal layout, but these cannot be regarded as entirely characteristic. Occasionally Messiaen uses *elements* of traditional schemes—as in the modified (eliptical) sonata movements of his early and middle periods. The final movement of the *Turangalila Symphonie* offers one of the very few instances of a complex tonal scheme. The music modulates through eleven keys before returning to its starting point. Needless to say, the effect has nothing in common with that of the continual modulation that one meets with in the music of César Franck, for instance (c.f. the Introduction of the latter's 1st *Chorale* for organ); nor does it have the slightest *rapprochement* with the Protean tonality of late Reger or early Schoenberg. In truth, the tonality of the *Turangalila* finale is hardly more than a *jeu d'esprit*—a kind of sweeping ironical bow. (This not-altogether serious interpretation is perhaps borne out by the fact that the next pieces that Messiaen was to write, the *Quatres Études de Rythme*, are entirely un-tonal.)

Messiaen's tonal language being what it is, we are surely justified in regarding the occasional appearance of traditional progressions in something other than the traditional light. For instance, the leisurely prolongation of a V-I progression in the accompaniment at the start of the *Amen de Désire* (from *Visions de L'Amen*) has lost its real function, and exists solely as a means of arriving at certain polyharmonic effects. To separate this simple tonal strand and criticise it on its own account is to misconstrue the passage hopelessly.

But a greater stumbling block than any problem of this nature, is the question of what one might call mono-tonality in Messiaen's music. We have already noted that Messiaen likes to work in one tonal area for considerable stretches at a time. The harmonic framework of these passages (or even movements) can therefore without frivolity be expressed by the formula 1 - 1, since what lies between, touches so transiently upon other tonalities that the tonic key is never truly superseded. In his valuable book, *Structural Hearing*,⁴ Dr. Felix Salzer observes that 'the whole interest and tension of a piece consists in the expansions, modifications, detours and elaborations of (the) basic direction, and these we call the prolongations . . . In the reciprocity between structure and prolongation lies the organic coherence of a musical work'. But when, as with Messiaen, the structure is scarcely more complex than that afforded by two book-ends enclosing a number of uniformly-bound books, this reciprocity ceases to be a significant factor, and everything depends on the intrinsic interest of the prolongations—their figuration, sonority, sequence, and so on. So long as the main structural principle is fidelity to a tonic that is either implied or stated ostinato-wise, it is obvious that a great deal depends on the interest that is aroused chord by chord. This, I believe, partly accounts for Messiaen's intense preoccupation with chord-building—a task in which he is aided by an astonishingly acute ear.

It is neither necessary nor possible to itemise Messiaen's vast harmonic vocabulary. Suffice it to say that grammatically it is divided into two parts. On the

³ Where it does occur, after a lengthy passage of static harmony, the effect is analogous to that of the modulation to E major at the end of Ravel's *Bolero*.

⁴ *Structural Harmony* by Dr. Felix Salzer. Charles Boni, New York, 1952.

one hand there are those chords which result from superpositions of one kind or another—of fourths, perfect or augmented, of fifths, perfect or diminished, of notes derived from the overtone series. (The chord C-E-G-B \flat -D-F \sharp -G \sharp -B \flat contains all the notes perceptible—according to Messiaen—when low C is sounded. It also contains all the notes of Mode 3 (1). Messiaen has called it the ‘resonance chord’ and he uses it with great frequency, deploying it in cascades of different inversions which do not of course change the harmony, but merely prolong it, in order to achieve what Messiaen would describe as ‘an effect of stained glass’).

The second category of chords involves numerous elaborations of the idea of the added note, or *appoggiatura*. In this respect, as in many others, Messiaen takes his cue from Debussy, though his researches carry him into far remoter fields of dissonance than were explored by his great predecessor. Let us examine the more complex aggregations first.

When, over twenty years ago, André Schaeffner analyzed certain harmonies in *The Rite of Spring* in terms of *appoggiature* of *appoggiature*, the validity of such an interpretation was widely questioned. In the case of certain of Messiaen’s harmonies, however, it is indisputably the only one possible. Take for instance what he calls the ‘chord on the dominant’. This comprises all the notes of the major scale, disposed as follows (in C major): G-A-C-D-F-B-E. On occasion, Messiaen might regard the two upper voices as *appoggiature* tending to resolve on to the degree a whole-tone below. (The notes A and C would similarly be resolved on to a unison B, and with the remaining notes retained, the chord becomes a simple dominant ninth.) At other times, however, Messiaen will suppress this resolution, and treat the first, suspensional, discord as a self-sufficient entity, upon which yet more *appoggiature* may be resolved. Thus the new, supplementary, *appoggiature*, C \sharp and F \sharp (in the upper voices) will now lean upon the harmony already cited; or they may even be included in it. Various treatments of this harmonic/melodic device may be found in many works of Messiaen’s middle period—notably in the song-cycle *Chants de Terre et de Ciel*, in the sixth of the *Visions de L’Amen* for two pianos, and the first movement of the *Quatuor pour la Fin du Temps*. These examples will be discussed in the critical section of the present study.

A simpler and more fundamental aspect of Messiaen’s harmony is the use of the added sixth and the added augmented fourth. This latter he deduces in a somewhat cavalier fashion from the overtone series, explaining that to an exceptionally fine ear the F sharp (the ninth partial) is perceptible in the ‘resonance’ of a low C; if added to the common chord (with or without added sixth), Messiaen will tend to resolve it on the root of the chord, to which he feels it to be strongly attracted. (Although not immediately relevant, it is worth noting at this point that the melodic step of a tritone in a major key occurs more often as III \flat -VI than as V \flat -I.) The acoustical justification of Messiaen’s tritone obsession does not bear close examination. But I cannot think that the flimsiness of the scientific argument matters very much. The fact remains that in common with other mystically-inclined composers—one thinks particularly of Scriabin, Holst, or Vaughan Williams⁵—Messiaen finds

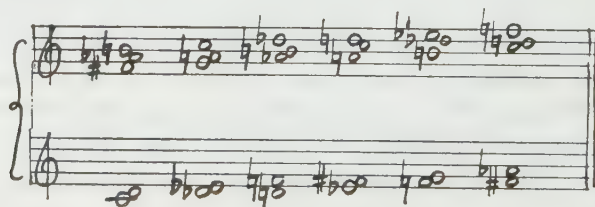
⁵ For a striking resemblance to Messiaen’s melodic style, see the melody at figure 6 of the third movement of the *Sinfonia Antartica*.

himself irresistibly drawn to the tritone, with its curious ambiguity and its acutely disjunct quality. Does not this immense tonal leap inspire in us a sense of almost physical disembodiment?

Significantly enough, Messiaen makes no attempt to rationalize his other harmonic obsession, the added sixth. He merely claims distinguished precedent (in the music of Chopin, Wagner, Chabrier, Debussy and Ravel), and considers that the chord may now be accepted as a legitimate part of the harmonic vocabulary. For him, as composer, this is quite sufficient explanation. But we who listen must go further than that—though not in the direction of mysticism, for neither tradition nor analogy will allow any such interpretation of the added sixth. The attraction this chord has for Messiaen can be explained in other terms. The added sixth has been described as ‘the inhibitory degree *par excellence*’, because in an odd way it is half concord and half discord. The consonance and dissonance exist side by side, in a state of mutual frustration. Thus the added sixth satisfies Messiaen’s need for musical materials that subvert the traditional tension-relaxation pattern, and hence alter the relationship of the music to the time factor. It is Messiaen’s wish to evolve a music that may ‘*éloigner le temporal*’.

One further device of chord-building must be mentioned, not because it is of central significance, but because it plays an important part in the suspension of harmonic movement. This is the scale-wise succession of modal added-note chords. A three or four-part chord, reproduced on each degree of the mode will, of course, undergo a continual change of structure, according to the relationships of tones and semi-tones. If the initial chord is a diatonic harmony with added note(s) this added note will also change its function. Thus, if one starts an ascending or descending scale in mode 2 (1) with a six-four chord with added augmented fourth, the next chord will be a dominant seventh with added sixth. In the cases of modes with larger basic groups, the number of different chords will be greater. But in any event, the effect of this kaleidoscopic chord-motion is one of almost suffocating tension. (See especially all but the flanking movements of *Visions de L'Amen* and many passages in *Turangalila*.) Only rarely does Messiaen relieve this tension. But when he does so, it is at once replaced by some new tension—the chord succession being used as a link, whether to a reprise, or to a fresh section. (The fifth movement of the *Visions de L'Amen* contains an obvious example of this, on page 67 of the score.) One unusual and very striking use of the modal chord-succession occurs in the last movement of *L'Ascension*, and deserves special mention. The mode is the seventh, in its third transposition. Here is the first half of the chord succession of mode 7 (1). (The remaining five chords merely reproduce their predecessors, a perfect fifth above.)

Ex. 4



For once, Messiaen handles the succession, not as a link, nor yet as a decorative element, but as an integral part of a melodic-harmonic idea. He uses the first five chords only, in their ascending form, *extrêmement lent*; in place of the subsequent chord we expect, the harmony resolves into the second inversion of V⁷ of G, which is retained whilst the upper voice hesitates between the supertonic and mediant. The idea is very simple; but the combination of the agonisingly prolonged anacrusis, followed at the accent by this sudden ecstatic liberation, provides one of those revelational experiences that can only arise from a true work of art. The title of the piece, *Prière du Christ montant vers son Père* is the direct inspiration of the harmonic process I have just described; the music penetrates the metaphysical concept, and tenderly, if unsubtly, illumines it. In our cynical age, an achievement of this kind is a rarity indeed.

But to revert to the question of Messiaen's harmonic vocabulary: it is evident that his chord building is dictated by considerations of colour rather than of structure. This is not to imply that the harmony is in any way anarchic—indeed, it is inconceivable that there is a single chord in his music that is of random construction. But it is difficult, and sometimes even impossible, to view the horizontal movement of the harmony in the light of any accepted structural laws. For the fact is, that each chord or small group of chords is a complete event in itself, distinguished from its fellows by placing, spacing (vertical or horizontal) and 'pigmentation'. Those who wish to criticize such harmony in terms of the classical concepts of harmonic tension, can have a merry time writing off this and that dissonance as being 'unfunctional'. But what, one might well ask these purists, is the *function* of dissonance in the music of Debussy's middle period? Even the disciples of Schenker have difficulty in applying their analytical methods to a piece like *Voiles* from the first book of *Préludes*. In some works of Debussy's, one can rationalize certain harmonic procedures by means of parenthesis chords and the like—the same is occasionally possible with Messiaen (*viz.* the beautiful conclusion of the song *Danse du bébé Pilule*)—but this cannot be taken very far. Nor should we expect that it could be. For with Debussy, during his middle period, as with Messiaen (until recently), intuition is the guiding light, and sensation the object of the quest. What could be more deeply embedded in sensation than the lingering elaboration of a single implied dissonance, which is the essence of the first part of *Voiles*, or the savouring of other dissonant chords in *Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut*—the fifth of the *Images*, and perhaps the most Messiaen-like of all Debussy's works? In speaking of Debussy's music, Nadia Boulanger has said that it invokes in her 'a paradoxical sense of mobility in immobility'. This remark could also be applied with some truth to the music of Messiaen, though it should not be carried too far, since the nature of the mobility is not *always* the same in the music of both composers. *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, for instance, may seem static on the surface, yet underneath, the music is in a constant state of thematic and harmonic change. It is an early work of Debussy's, but in nothing of Messiaen's, whether early or late, does one find the paradox of motion take quite this form.

Since Messiaen's music is harmonically in a state of partial abeyance, it is not surprising that his melodies should tend to emphasize intervallic relations, at

the expense of implied harmony. Indeed, his most powerful and extended melodic ideas are those which have no harmonic support whatever—witness the many instances of pure monody in his music. (It is noticeable that when Messiaen attempts to forge a more traditional melodic-harmonic structure, as in the theme of the *Theme and Variations* for violin and piano, the result is somewhat loose and artificial.)⁶

This being so, we need not be surprised at the influences that show themselves in Messiaen's melodic style: Plainsong, Hindu music, and Bird Song—three highly developed forms that take no account of our tertian harmony. I do not propose to discuss Messiaen's melody in detail until the second part of the present study; but before doing so it is necessary to make some general observations about the influences that I have already mentioned, and the aesthetic laws that interlink them.

Messiaen regards plainsong less as a thing to be directly and extensively imitated, than as a source for expressive melodic contours, and as a form from which certain structural principles can be extracted. Thus a piece like the lengthy monody for organ, entitled *Subtilité des Corps Glorieux* may not appear to have any immediate connexion with plainsong, since its 'line' is consistently chromatic. (Messiaen's modes, of course, do not readily permit the reproduction of plainsong sequences.) Nevertheless, this melody is closely modelled on the periodic structure of a plainsong melody, complete with cadential repetitions.

The aesthetic that lies behind Messiaen's affection for plainsong may link him with Satie and Debussy on the one hand, and the *Schola Cantorum* on the other, but the manifestations of his affection take a very personal form. However, it is not difficult for us to account for, and sympathise with, this aspect of Messiaen's creative personality. But how are we to reconcile it with his researches in the field of Birdsong and Indian music? It is sometimes suggested that the musical influences professed by Messiaen are like the findings of a jackdaw—things that have caught the fancy and been appropriated at random. This I believe to be quite erroneous. Messiaen's philosophy and aesthetic is a simple and unified one; in support of this contention, and by way of interlinking plainsong and Indian folkmusic, I should like to quote a passage dealing with plainsong from W. H. Mellers's *Music and Society*.⁷

'The absence of harmonic tension and the concentration on a single line, divests the music of any dramatic sense, and conveys an impression of one-ness with the universe. This quality it shares with some monophonic music of the east, and the philosophy implied in it also has affinities with Eastern religion. The singer is not interested in the 'expression' of the individual; he is rather the medium through which the voice of God manifests itself. The timelessness of such a notion is conveyed through the rhythmic fluidity, and the lack of cadential finality or of regular metrical accent.' Substitute Messiaen for 'the singer' in the last sentence but one, and the subsequent remarks remain equally apposite.

⁶ The slow movements of the *Quatuor pour la Fin du Temps* (1941) are splendid exceptions to this rule.

⁷ *Music and Society* by W. H. Mellers. (Dobson, London.)

Apart from the prevalence of conjunct motion, and the absence of harmonic implications, plainsong and Indian monophony have little in common, morphologically. But that is not my immediate concern at this point. The effect of these two influences upon the *structure* of Messiaen's melody will be examined in the second part of this study. At present, I am chiefly concerned with the aesthetic factors that draw Messiaen towards mediaeval and oriental sources.

A. H. Fox-Strangways, in his remarkable book, *The Music of Hindostan*, also comments on the analogue between Indian folk-music and the work of the pre-renaissance era. He ascribes it to the fact that India is still living in an age of Faith.

'Europe thinks poorly of a religion that does not result in a good life; while India fixes its attention on the quality of religion, the amount of realization and of vision it contains, and leaves the good life to follow as a natural consequence.'

'Faith': I have used the word already in comparing Messiaen with Satie, and I shall stress it again, for it has a direct bearing upon purely musical aspects of Messiaen's art, and at the same time explains why we may describe his philosophy as an anachronism without using the word in a pejorative sense.

Before the Age of Reason, music had no call to reflect the uncertainties of life. Whatever passion one may find in Monteverdi or Bach, whatever noble pity in Schütz, the music perpetually dwells in a state of spiritual calm. How different is the world of Haydn or Mozart, or again of Beethoven. One might define Wit as a certain wry acceptance of the instability of existence; we can discern both the instability and the acceptance behind the form and tonality of Haydn's music, and in its own way, Mozart's. We find it too in the music of latter-day wits—in the Britten of *Albert Herring*, the Blacher of the *Orchester-Ornament*, and the Stravinsky of almost anything. The reaction to instability of the Prometheans—Beethoven, or for that matter, Schoenberg—is of quite another kind. They seek to resolve the opposing forces, to fuse the broken strands of life with the Divine Fire.

In an age of Faith, there can be no instability, and therefore its art will neither seek to follow a course through crisis to ultimate resolution, nor to set opposites in ironic juxtaposition. The cosmos is unified, and the artist's only duty is to pay homage to what unifies. 'Unlike Western music,' writes Alain Daniélou in his book *Northern Indian Music*⁸, 'which constantly changes and contrasts its moods, Indian music always centres on one particular emotion, which it develops, explains and cultivates, upon which it insists'. So it is with the music of Messiaen.

One is tempted to draw further parallels between East and West in the matter of expressivity: the various church modes had very clearly defined expressive functions in regard to the feasts of the year, whilst the 'meaning' of Indian *ragas* is so explicit (to initiates) that complex ideas and states of mind can be conveyed. Messiaen likewise invests his music with far-reaching symbolism—though it is of a more pictorial nature than that of Indian music—and just as the Indian will associate a certain colour or emotion with a given note, so will Messiaen with a chord or key. (Key

⁸ Alain Daniélou, *Northern Indian Music*. Christopher Johnson, London, 1949.

symbolism is an aspect of Messiaen's music that requires further examination—though little enough is needed to discover that F# major is specially reserved for attitudes of supreme devotion.)

There is one very important difference of aesthetic between Indian music and plainsong. The music of the Ambrosian and Gregorian orders, heartfelt as it is, seems to belong to an essentially Apollonian mode of thought. It is poised and uninvolved. Indian music, on the other hand, is wholly Dionysian. Its aim is to induce in the listener that state which Indians describe as liberation, and which we would call ecstasy. 'Raga is what charms',⁹ writes one of the classical theoreticians. It would be obvious that Messiaen's music belongs to the same aesthetic, even if the composer himself had not written (of his ideal listener) 'être séduit, tel sera son unique désir'.

Messiaen thus has a closer spiritual affinity with the music of North India than with mediaeval plainsong. Nevertheless, his ties with the latter are strong. But what relationship, one might ask, does bird-song bear to all this? The answer embraces both aesthetic and technical factors. Bird-song is a quasi-musical expression of emotion in its purest form. Messiaen refers to birds as 'les petites serviteurs de l'immatérielle joie', and as an amateur ornithologist, he will know that they express their joy (or sorrow) in a language as explicitly meaningful as that provided by the Indian *ragas* and *raginis*. Certain principles of structure—governing rise and fall, accent and repetition—appeal particularly to Messiaen, and the 'line' of a complex bird-song is such that it admits of a highly chromatic stylization. Bird-song is often microtonal, and Messiaen transforms it freely, sometimes even involving it in an implied harmony. 'It is futile to copy nature slavishly', he observes, and it is obvious to the ear that his finest essays in the *style oiseau*—such as the one in the sixth movement of *Turangalila*—are in the nature of fantasias or variations on a brief theme taken from nature. (Messiaen has filled many note-books with far-from-brief bird-songs that he has taken down in various parts of the world.) The *style oiseau*, like the *style hindoue*, satisfies Messiaen's desire for the ornamental,¹⁰ and at the same time allows him to avoid any harmonic implications, if he so wishes.

Messiaen sometimes combines bird-song in counterpoint—see for instance the *Trois Petites Liturgies* or the *Messe de Pentecôte*—but the intended effect is decorative rather than kinetically contrapuntal; Messiaen's tonal language is of such a kind that counterpoint cannot function in the normal way. The only example¹¹ of an academic fugue (actually only a fugato) known to me in Messiaen's music is a predictable disaster. On the other hand, the immensely exciting fugal piece for piano entitled *Par Lui tout a été fait* (the sixth of the *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant Jésus*) is an undoubted success, since the conception is dynamic and rhythmic rather than tonal. It is not really a fugue. But who cares?

Of course the word 'charm' here defines an occult rather than an emotional force.

¹⁰ 'A melody without ornament is like a night without moon, a river without water, a vine without flowers, or a woman without jewels'. These words from the *Natyashastra*, a great theoretical work on Indian music, are quoted by Alain Daniélou (op. cit.).

¹¹ In the song *Minuit pile et face* from the cycle *Chants de Terre et de Ciel* (1938).

Apart from occasional fugato and quite frequent canon, it is true to say that the superposition of self-sufficient harmonic strands takes the place of conventional polyphony in Messiaen's music. Here is an illustration of what I mean, from the piano introduction to the song *Action de grâces* (*Poèmes pour Mi*).

Ex. 5A. Reproduced by kind permission of Durand et Cie, Paris.

Ex. 5B. Reproduced by kind permission of Rouart et Lerolle, Paris.

The upper part is in Mode 3 (II), whilst the lower is in Mode 2 (I). The last three chords unite the two strands in Mode 6. The independence of the two parts is not as complete as in the majority of instances of polymodal writing in Messiaen's music. A distinct feeling of A (major/minor) is generated by the placing of the A major 6/4 chord in the lower part and the C major 6/4 chord in the upper part. But despite this element of correspondance, the example shows the central fact about Messiaen's polychordal technique: that it is yet another means of inhibiting the forward-moving impulses of tonal harmony.

How then are we to listen to this passage, and others like it? While we wallow in the tonal ambiguity that prevails between the first chord and the cadence, we may—in fact, must—savour the clash of each chord as a purely sensuous event. In this example, our *understanding* is helped somewhat by the tonal correspondances. But where there is no correspondance, we may be required to listen to one strand as a kind of chordal *Hauptstimme*, allowing the remainder to recede into the background where it becomes almost as much a part of our unconscious as our instinctive appreciation of overtones. This is especially the case with the work for two pianos entitled *Visions de l'Amen*.

It is interesting to observe how Messiaen's attitude to chromaticism has developed. Although, as a result of polymodality, the twelve notes of the chromatic scale are constantly 'in the air', Messiaen was some time in taking advantage of the structural principles this might suggest. However, a passage in the organ piece *Les Eaux de la Grâce* (1939) cited by Messiaen in his *Technique de mon Langage*, shows signs of a growing 'twelve-note consciousness'. The union of two modes

at a certain point in the piece involves eleven of the twelve notes. Messiaen withholds the twelfth for a while, and exploits the tension which arises. When the twelfth note is finally sounded, it helps to emphasize a change to a new modality. Of course, this has no connexion with the form of twelve-note music, but it is a sign that Messiaen was already on the road that was to lead him to the serial methods of his recent works.

The more tenuous the hold on tonality becomes in Messiaen's music, the more one feels the need of something to propel the music forward. This need is satisfied by rhythm. Rhythm in a purely horizontal sense is insufficient to replace the tensions and relaxations of tonal harmony. In *The Rite of Spring*, it takes all Stravinsky's genius to maintain the musical interest throughout a single rhythmic line. If Messiaen's music were also mono-rhythmic, one might be excused for reacting somewhat as follows: 'Well, this chord makes a very interesting sound, and so does this one, but what is there to induce me to listen from chord A through chord B to chord C?' Messiaen supplies this inducement by means of polyrhythm. But before examining this, it is important to understand his general approach to rhythm.

Rhythm in classical and romantic music is merely an adjunct to harmony and melody. The history of the gradual disassociation of rhythm from the other musical elements is a commonplace of every elementary guide to modern music. The process is generally assumed to have reached its climax in *The Rite of Spring*—though personally I don't believe this to be true, partly because the rhythmic treatment of lengthy sections in *The Rite* is quite traditional, and partly because even at its most exacerbated, the rhythm takes some account of harmonic factors. However, there are one or two exceptions. Especially important is the famous opening of the *Auguries of Spring*. (Significantly, the harmony is motionless.) Messiaen analyses this passage as follows,¹² starting at the first *sforzando*, and substituting (for the sake of clarity) single notes for the uneven groups of semiquavers that succeed each *sforzando*.

Ex. 6

2	6	3	4	5	3
A	B	A	B	A	B

Such an analysis doubtless tells us more about Messiaen than about Stravinsky, but the passage is clearly seen to consist of two elements—A, which is progressively augmented, and B, which is progressively diminished. One cannot say that the structure of this rhythmic motif implies a new concept of rhythm, since it is highly unlikely that Stravinsky consciously formalized his idea. But the probability that rhythm in *The Rite* and *Les Noces* is purely instinctive neither lessens nor increases its analytical interest. It was for Messiaen to rationalize Stravinsky's procedures, and develop them in his own music, for Stravinsky's evolution after *The Soldier's Tale* precluded further essays in pure rhythm.

¹² Apart from a passing reference to *The Rite* at the start of his *Technique*, Messiaen makes no further mention of the work; but in his analysis classes he continually quotes it as a source.

Two principles that underly the Stravinsky motif quoted above are fundamental to Messiaen's whole approach to rhythm. The first is that rhythm can exist above and beyond tonal values, and the second is that there are other laws than those of metre. (In Messiaen's music, bar lines are solely a means of facilitating performance.) The place of metre is taken by the free development of small units of one or more time-values, and the relationship of rhythm to the Dance thus becomes very remote. Methods of development owe much to an expansion of the classical principles of rhythmic augmentation and diminution, and of retrograde.

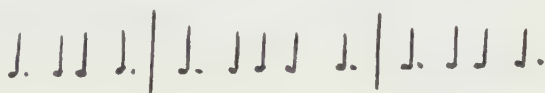
Like early Stravinsky, and like the Oriental musician, Messiaen tends to avoid straightforward duple or triple groupings, and favours instead the assymetry of compound time.¹³ Even when he is not working with a formally developed rhythm, he will use an added value (for instance, the semiquaver in Example 2) to ensure assymetry. He compares the function of the added rhythm to that of the added note.

One of the most important features of Messiaen's rhythmic language is what he calls a non-retrogradable rhythm—a somewhat inexact term for a rhythm whose retrograde is identical with its original form: in short, a palindrome. Stravinsky and Bartok often used such rhythms unconsciously. We find a simple example in the xylophone rhythm that opens the third movement of Bartok's *Music for Strings and Percussion*. (It is simple because it is merely a notated *accelerando/ritardando*.)

Just as Messiaen's modes contain internal transpositions that prevent multiple transpositions of the whole, so do non-retrogradable rhythms contain internal retrogradations. Messiaen is quick to point out this parallel, and remarks that the rhythms realize in a horizontal sense what the modes realize vertically. Once more, 'le charme des impossibilités' draws Messiaen towards musical materials that are rigid and immutable. The non-retrogradable rhythms that so often lie at the heart of some complex passage seem to be yet another symbol for The Word.

Messiaen varies the non-retrogradable rhythms by amplifying them at the centre—a method first employed in the *Vingt Regards*, and subsequently in almost every work. A notable example may be found in the latter half of the recently published piece for piano, *Canteyodjaya*. Messiaen finds a precedent for this procedure in the central section of the *Pagan Night* sequence of *The Rite*, where the rhythm of the solo trumpet part is essentially as follows:

Ex. 7



The initial non-retrogradable rhythm is that of the Indian rhythm *vijaya*. Rather thoughtlessly, Stravinsky's supporters have scoffed at Messiaen's delight in finding Indian rhythms hidden in *The Rite*. In fact it is very understandable, for the discovery proves the Oriental contention (to which Messiaen surely subscribes)

¹³ It is worth remembering that the change to symmetrical rhythm in European music was contemporary with the beginnings of harmony.

that 'the sounds used in music are those whose mutual relations form an image of the basic mathematical laws of the universe. Thus musical sounds reproduce the first creation of the Primordial Intellect. This creation is at the same time a rhythm and a thought.'¹⁴

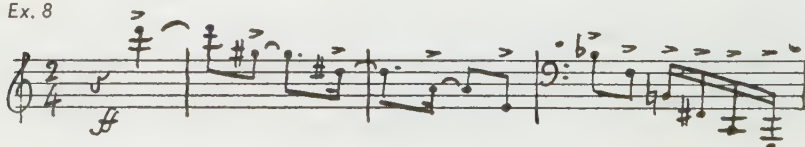
The most simple form of polyrhythm in Indian music is that afforded by the drum-accompaniment to a solo song. The drummer will improvise with ingenuity around the singer's line, imitating it in augmentation or diminution, or rhapsodising with complete freedom. Fox-Strangways has compared the process to a breath-taking game of hide-and-seek. Strangways particularly admires the way in which simultaneous conclusion is attained after a great increase in tension—thus securing a genuinely cadential effect. The effect of Messiaen's polyrhythms, though more calculated, is of the same order. The various rhythmic elements are intermeshed like different-sized cogs in a great machine. The rotation of these cogs induces a sense of meaningful activity, and ultimately of completion. It is not possible to illustrate this in a brief space; it will be one of the purposes of the second article to examine the process more critically. At present, it only remains to mention one of Messiaen's favourite methods of inter-relating the elements of a polyrhythm.

If the reader turns once again to Example 5A, and examines it afresh from a rhythmic point of view, he will observe that the rhythm of the lower part exactly follows that of the upper part, at a crochet's distance. Messiaen terms this a rhythmic canon—a device which occurs in his music with some frequency. (The example quoted above shows the 'canon' in the truncated form in which it is first introduced. At a later stage in the song it is developed further.) It will be noted that while the rhythm is developmental, the harmony is firmly rooted—in the upper part to a group of six chords, in the lower to five. The way in which the rhythm plays across this ostinato recalls the mediaeval technique of isorhythm.

The subject of the 'canon' is itself closely organized. The implied unit is that of three crochets. The first two values (minim, crochet) present a variant. The second two diminish the variant, the third group (of three values) diminishes the original; and so on.

Since the completion of his book, *Technique de mon Langage Musicale*, Messiaen has begun to think in terms of 'chromatic rhythm'. This is a direct outcome of the increasing chromaticism of his harmony and melody. As far as I am aware, the first instance of a fusion of chromatic melody and 'chromatic' rhythm occurs in the first movement of *Turangalila*, wherein the following motif is announced in unison by the full orchestra.

Ex. 8



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¹⁴ Alain Daniélou. Op. cit.

(The unit is the semiquaver; the succession of durations therefore runs thus: 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 2, 2, 1, 1, 1, 1.)

From this to the serialization of rhythm as well as melody is not a large step; and Messiaen made just that step in 1949, two years after the completion of *Turangalîla. Modes de valeurs et d'intensités*, the first of the *Quatre Études de Rythme*, was written at Darmstadt in the summer of 1949, and is devoted exclusively to the application of serial (or rather, permutational) technique to rhythm—and also to pitch, attack, and intensity. The other three *Études* make varying use of the same procedure—as do all his subsequent works.

The *Modes de valeurs et d'intensités* is frankly experimental, but the set of four études has already reached the status of a modern classic, on the Continent, and is as widely known as the late works of Webern. The influence of these pieces upon many younger composers is very strong, and it may even be discerned in the latest works of so established a composer as Dallapiccola.¹⁵

Messiaen's recent works are more abstract and more highly disciplined than anything he has so far attempted. The music he has written since the revolutionary ninth movement of *Turangalîla* is at once the culmination of twenty years' highly individual creative work, and the starting point for further activity.

In my next article I propose to examine a number of Messiaen's works in the order of their composition, with particular regard to matters of overall musical structure (as yet hardly touched upon), and to the evolution of his rhythmic language. I shall also attempt to put forward, quite as critically, but no less tentatively, a possible estimate of Messiaen's artistic stature.

¹⁵ Notably in his *Goethe-lieder* and his *Quaderno Musicale di Annalibera*.

The author would like to express his thanks to United Music Publishers Ltd., Montague Street, London, for their great kindness in allowing him to examine or borrow certain of the scores mentioned in this article.

A complete list of Messiaen's works, with publishers, will be given at the conclusion of the article, in the March issue.

MUSIC INTO WORDS

Jacques Barzun

The world, the mind, is an endless miscellany.

—WILLIAM HAZLITT (1829)

I

The invitation to deliver one of the Elson¹ lectures under the auspices of the Library of Congress must come to anyone as a great honour, and so it was to me. But I must candidly add that I found myself regarding it as providential besides, an opportunity ideally contrived to suit my own purposes. For the occasion would put at my mercy, for an hour or so, just the kind of audience I had long wished for, an audience interested in music and yet equally interested—or else it would not be here—in discourse about music. I wanted such an audience in order to try out upon it some ideas about the relation of music and words that I had so far been able to test only piece-meal, in private conversation, where the irrelevant, sceptical, and—shall I say—uncalled-for interruptions of my guest or host interfered with full exposition.

Now in the usual kind of audience one is likely to find a mixture of amateurs, who derive their artistic pleasure almost exclusively from listening to music, and of 'literary people' to whom music is worse than a closed book; for they can open a book but they cannot penetrate music. This fact defines my problem, which is also indicated by the title 'music into words'. The problem is, Are there genuine connexions between music and words, or only accidental associations, some of them tolerable but most of them forced or farfetched? Is it possible to describe music in ordinary prose, or is technical jargon indispensable? And if description is allowed—perhaps 'translation' would be the fitter term—does its possibility imply that music conveys a meaning outside itself, like the arts of literature and painting?

You can see that on the answer to these questions a good many of our activities depend for their justification—the whole status and value of music criticism for instance. You may not care much about music criticism; you may be willing to let it perish unwept. But you are something of a music critic every time you open your mouth about a concert you have just heard. Can it be that your words are meaningless, that you are saying just nothing with great vehemence? Again, the teaching of

¹ Louis Charles Elson, 1848–1920. American author, composer and editor. In 1945 the Library of Congress received a bequest from his widow, to provide lectures on music and musical literature in his memory.

music is inseparable from comment, appreciation, and interpretation of styles. Are all the words of all the patient souls who push young talents through the mill just so much gibberish? We are inclined to say so even as we go on gibbering. We have been told so often that the adagio of the *Moonlight* Sonata is not 'dreamy' and certainly not moonlight; that there is nothing 'stark' about any of Bach's two-part inventions; and that pieces with a title like *Des pas sur la neige* are music in spite of their silly, reprehensible allusions. Snow is snow and music is music; the one is a physical, tangible thing, and hence there is a word for it; the other is immaterial, elusive, absolute, and hence no words can reach it.

From this it follows that only the names of the notes (which are interchangeable parts of no intrinsic significance) can legitimately be used in discussion, and hence discourse about music must remain technical. As such it can only interest professionals, and it is limited to some few salient points within a piece. A bar-by-bar technical analysis of a large work would be unendurable even to professionals—in short, great works of music are unquestionably great but their greatness is as it were unspeakable.

All this, I need hardly say, is the prevailing view. It has an astringent quality which was no doubt needed when the looseness of gushing 'appreciation' became general fifty years ago. But on reflection this self-denial about words appears really as a rather crude remedy, which I suspect is now more often used as an instrument of intellectual pride than in any good cause. Indeed it resembles nothing so much as the cant of the old-fashioned scientist and secularist who loved to shock naïve believers in Genesis by facing them with some bit of high school geology or astronomy. At any rate as regards music today, I think we have reached a point where we are in honour bound to avoid the naïveté of both parties: we know of old that a piece of music tells us nothing about snow. So it is childish to keep reminding the world that inarticulate sounds are not articulate. The formidable question remains, why the great musicians, the great critics, and the great public keep talking about music as if their words meant something.

The historical truth behind this question was deeply impressed upon me recently when I was engaged in selecting, translating, and editing for the general reader a collection of prose pieces about music.² Having to exclude technical discussions, I nevertheless found that I had on hand an abundance of stories, sketches, essays, confessions, letters, and anecdotes, which taken together gave an excellent idea of what music is for, what it is like, how it lives and moves in the lives of those attuned to it.

And when I looked at my cast of characters as a whole, I saw that it included the great composers from Monteverdi to Van Dieren; the great writers from Cellini to Shaw; the great performers (who might also be writers and composers) from Bach to Busoni. It was then I formulated the conclusion that whatever affectation we might be mouthing today about music being undiscussable must be deemed local

Pleasures of Music. A reader's choice of great writing about music and musicians from Cellini to Bernard Shaw. Edited with an introduction by Jacques Barzun. New York. 1951.

and temporary. It could not withstand the weight of testimony that had grown under my hand in support of the proposition that music can be talked about like any other art; and that perhaps it *must* be talked about if it is to give its devotees full measure in enjoyment and significance.

What was further remarkable as I considered my two hundred thousand words about music was that no author or composer in the total span of four centuries had even tried to make rational the connexion between his words and the musical experience that he discussed. All seemed to take the connexion as self-evident, which must be because these literary and musical artists lacked on that point the benefit of modern sceptical thought. But given the prevalence of this scepticism we cannot be so lordly, we are compelled by the current opinion to build up a step-by-step defence of the position unconsciously taken in the past by the great composers and critics. At the same time it would be foolish to neglect whatever may be found valid in the negative view, for our whole effort should tend towards something I consider the great desideratum in contemporary American culture, namely a comprehensive grammar of criticism for dealing with art.

II

To take off from the negative view that music is untranslatable, we must first separate the upholders of it into sheep and goats, that is to say, into musical people, who are usually gentle and much alike but limited in vocabulary—like sheep; and literary people, who feel vaguely put upon by music, and whose intellectual hides are tough—like goats. Both groups maintain that music cannot be talked about properly or usefully, but their grounds for thinking so are exactly opposite. The literary person proclaims that 'he knows nothing' about music, and yet he may own a record collection and listen with enjoyment. He infers that he is tongue-tied because of his ignorance of technicalities and he concludes that the only possible criticism of music is technical. His argument amounts to saying: 'I am a man of words; if words could be used about music I should be able to produce them; I can't, hence music is an experience absolutely self-contained'.

To this reasoning the first rejoinder is that the 'literary' listener has perhaps not sufficiently reflected about such musical experience as he has. How can a man 'know nothing' about sensations he has undergone willingly, repeatedly, and pleasurably for a whole year, for ten years, for a lifetime? Obviously he is confusing the conventions of a trade with the essentials of human knowledge. He is suffering from the twentieth-century disease which is to suppose that knowledge and professionalism are synonymous; by which principle it is clear that primitive man could never learn to build bridges since there were as yet no schools of engineering.

Turn now to the professional or the accomplished amateur musician. He swims among sonatas like a fish in water, but contents himself with but a single pair of critical terms beyond the strictly technical: to him any musical work is either 'a swell piece' or 'pretty lousy'. Immersed as he is in performance and in judging performance,

he has no need to go whoring after more language. Music for him is quite truthfully a self-contained experience. He can share it with his fellows by an almost bodily communication of sympathy. He is moreover so busy practising or composing or coaching others—not to speak of putting up music stands and dog-eared scores—that he rarely has time to straighten out his impressions. If he ever does so, his temper is bound to be hostile towards anything ‘literary’. The violinist senses that the *Razoumowsky* Quartets do not pertain to the Napoleonic Wars as does Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*. He assumes that he knows all there is to know about music, and concludes that it is an art diametrically opposed to the so-called ‘representative arts’ of literature and painting. If challenged, he clinches his case by pointing out that each word in the language has a distinct meaning known to all, whereas single notes or chords mean nothing, and thus may mean anything.

It is here that the counter argument must take hold and destroy, once for all, the platitudes offered about words. It is not true that words have intrinsic meanings; it is not true that meanings reside in words. Turn to the dictionary and look up a common noun: the first striking fact about it is that it has eight, ten, a dozen, or a score of meanings. If someone were to break into this room shouting ‘Chair!’ it would be impossible to tell whether he was asking for a seat or calling upon the chairman. He might be a mad professor who had been deprived of his post—for in a University (as you know) a chair is a post . . . which is why it cannot be sat on. In an eighteenth-century novel a chair is a vehicle, and in a twentieth-century drawing room a chair is almost anything that is not a rug or a lamp. This last fact is very important, for it reminds us how wrong it is to say that a word automatically puts us in mind of an object. On hearing the word ‘chair’ and being told further that it means a seat, anyone will visualize something different; a thousand people will picture thousands of dissimilar objects. ‘Chair’ is really an empty sound which we can fill with meaning only with the help of many other words and of much other knowledge which is not and which never can be put into words.

This is universally true of workaday life, where we can seldom understand the snatches of conversation overheard on the street, the quick undertones exchanged within a strange family, or the easy allusions of other men talking shop. In short, there is nothing mechanical about verbal meanings, not even the practical meanings of daily life. All communication in words remains an art, no matter how habitual, and like every art it is made up of more elements than can ever be enumerated. Tone of voice, gesture, and facial expression, choice and placement of words, omission and superfluity of sounds, plus the indefinite sphere of relevancies that we call context, all play their role in the transmission of any one meaning, not excepting the most trivial.

Obvious though all this may be, it can stand being underscored again and again because discourse about art and criticism usually forgets it. Speech is so common that we seldom analyze its mysteries, and as a result comparisons among the arts are strangely distorted. For the sake of simplicity the stuff of each art is assigned some flat, blunt attributes that supposedly exclude one another: words stand for things and ideas; paint reproduces the visible world of nature; music is pure form;

architecture is machinery for living—singly or in groups; poetry, dance, and music are time arts, the plastic and graphic arts are concerned with space . . . —none of these aphorisms is without suggestiveness and importance, but not one of them is wholly true. And the terms of each are in some sense transférable to the rest. Thus, on the basis of what has been so far rehearsed about the character of verbal meanings, one can say that the two forms of sound called speech and music are alike in requiring a multitude of qualities and modifiers before they can make a significant impression on a human mind. Just as you cannot produce a solitary middle C and expect a listener to be greatly affected one way or another, so you cannot utter the single word ‘chair’ and hope for much of a response.

And even now the comparison still remains a little unfair to words, for the parallel has been drawn between the high art of music and the merely workaday use of speech. If we pass from daily talk to literature proper, the force of all that has been shown is augmented manifold. Augmented and also complicated by the presence of the new element which we recognize as artistry, though it is impossible to define and difficult to isolate. The borderline between the utilitarian and the literary uses of speech is not intrinsic and fixed, as we might casually suppose; it is circumstantial and shifting, and this variability is reproduced in all of the so-called fine arts, including music. A bugle sounding taps in camp says ‘go to bed’ just as clearly as the vesper bell says ‘come to church’. This is by context and convention, exactly as in articulate speech. But in an opera those same musical sounds would be quite transfigured and charged with new meanings. Again, certain pieces of music, for instance a jig or a Virginia reel, though they utter no distinct message, are nevertheless little else than invitations to the dance. The appeal to mind or spirit is slight, whereas the pull upon the legs is powerful. Yet a dance movement in a Bach suite or the finale of Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony uses the same conventional rhythms and figures with wholly different effect.

It is therefore not the presence or absence of conventional forms and phrases that distinguishes art from messages of utility, or that distinguishes the art of music from any other. All we can say is that art differs from workaday communication in that it transcends the literal—not excludes it or denies it, for it often contains it—but it goes beyond. If this is so, then another imaginary barrier between music and the other arts disappears: no art denotes or gives out information. We can test this generality by considering in its light a passage of literature, say the scene in Shakespeare where Hamlet finds Yorick’s skull and says: ‘I knew him, Horatio; a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy. He hath borne me on his back a thousand times. And now how abhorrèd in my imagination it is! My gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft . . .’ etc. Clearly these words are not to *inform* us that Hamlet knew Yorick. They do not answer the question that a lawyer might put: did you or did you not know and associate with one Yorick, deceased? Their purpose is quite other, namely to impress us with certain realities of death and thus to heighten the shock with which we shall soon see Ophelia’s burial procession. Nor is this all. The words, while disclosing yet another aspect of Hamlet’s character, suggest his constant harking back to the old days when his father reigned; moreover,

the facts presented fit and sustain the brooding atmosphere of the whole play, so that the effect—as it is the purpose—of those simple words is to reverberate endlessly.

If, contrariwise, Hamlet came on and said: 'Death really does dreadful things to the nicest, jolliest people,' the gist of his remarks would be exactly what it is in the scene as we have it, but the impression made would be nil. The *meaning* that only art conveys would be blotted out. As a working part of that meaning, altogether unlike 'information', notice the small but effective shift from Hamlet's 'he' and 'him', denoting the Yorick he remembers, to: 'how abhorred in my imagination *it* is.' *It* is at once Hamlet's recollection and Yorick turned to earth. This, if I may say so, is the secret of literature: the adjective 'literary' means: doing this sort of thing with words; it does not mean using words to denote physical objects.

For conceivably Shakespeare could have used many other objects, invented other details, to serve his same purpose in the same way. Hence we should never mistake the literal ballast of the sentences for the meaning of the piece. The play—any play—is not about the ideas, people, or cocktail glasses that it juggles with; in a strict sense literature is not *about* anything, it *is*—precisely like music. And precisely like music, like any art, literature offers a presentment having significance. What kind of significance will be suggested in a moment; at this point it is enough to conclude from all we have said that the things signified are not the things named.

If it should be objected that a poetic drama such as *Hamlet* is not a fair test (even though the passage chosen was common prose) I would remind the objector of a scene in *Madame Bovary*, a prose work notoriously designed to exhibit the prosaic in life. Well, in *Madame Bovary* Flaubert makes one of the principal love scenes take place in a cab that keeps driving aimlessly round and round the provincial city; the incident is in keeping with the rest of the story, but it is safe to say that anyone who believes in the literal circuit of that vehicle knows nothing about love, cabs, or literature.

Here, of course, one must beware of falling into the trap of symbolic interpretation: the cab does not 'stand for' anything. Such an explanation would only be literalism at the second remove, duller still than the simple-minded sort. Let someone suggest that Flaubert's cab means the wild drive of the passions, or the vicious circle of sensuality, and the very thought makes one groan. Why? Because it is limiting and mechanical; it sets us to solving riddles instead of grasping meanings. Allegories are frigid for this very reason, that they seem to offer significance only to dilute it into information. Similarly, works of literature that communicate by means of broad generalities about love, death, fate or revenge are invariably tedious and, paradoxically, false. We cease to believe in propositions which in other contexts we should readily accept. And this in turn explains why it is fatal for an author to go directly after the eternal verities. He can state them, but the statement won't be art; for let me repeat at the risk of being tedious myself, literature does not reside in propositions; though it may say a great deal, it tells nothing; it thereby resembles music: it is a music of meanings.

If this assertion is true we should expect that great works of literature, in spite of being verbally explicit, would give rise to widely different interpretations. This is exactly what we find. No two critics agree about the meaning of any given masterpiece, and the greater the work the greater the disagreement. This remains true after the most laborious reading of the text and the most honest attention to previous commentaries. From this one can infer what must be the unspoken differences that co-exist in the thousands of minds which have read *Hamlet* or *The Divine Comedy*. We get a glimpse of this chaos of opinion when we discover what an earlier century thought of a work that we think we know well: it seems like a wholly other treatment of the same subject—the movie we gape at after reading the novel.³

You have no doubt jumped ahead of me in applying this generality to our continuing parallel between the art of words and the art of music: the well-worn argument that denies clear meaning to a piece of music because no two listeners give the same account of it is an argument that works equally well against clear meaning in literature. Yet, it will be said, no one will ever confuse what happens in *Hamlet* with what happens in *King Lear*, whereas your musical programme hunter will hear the waves of the ocean in a piece which another takes for the Rape of the Sabine Women. Quite so, but this contrast is only superficially correct. The plots of Shakespeare's dramas are not likely to be confused because they are the skeleton, not the significance of the piece; whereas what the programmatizer hopes to tell us with his ocean or his Sabines is the significance, the upshot, the net effect. If we want in music the true parallel of plot we must look for the form of the work and its key relationships, a skeleton about which there will be no confusion either, assuming an educated listener.

Returning now to the significance of the given piece of music, we may grant that the inventor of programmes is almost certain to fail; he fails, that is, to convince us that the piece is the same thing as, or a true copy of, a storm on the ocean. Being now profound students of literature we know why he fails. He fails because he has tried to equate a work of art with a proposition or with the name of a thing or an idea. And we rebel against this either because we know such an equation to be impossible or, in less conscious moments, because we have a pet name or proposition of our own, which clashes with the other; this conflict itself helping to prove the impossibility.

Thus when Sir Laurence Olivier produced his motion picture version of *Hamlet* he prefaced it with a short explanation—a few programmatic words—that defined the forthcoming action as 'the tragedy of a man who could not make up his mind.' My feelings were immediately up in arms against this hoary misinterpretation of a play in which the hero makes up his mind quickly, repeatedly, and brilliantly. But the play would not be more accurately described by maintaining the opposite of Olivier's view—which happens also to be Goethe's view and Coleridge's. Rather we must give up these attempts at summarizing, or at least acknowledge that they are nothing but shorthand reminders, and careless shorthand at that. Is Tolstoy's

³ Note that within living memory Mozart has turned from a gay, superficial composer to a profound and tragic one.

War and Peace a novel about Napoleon—no, certainly not; and yet . . . well, yes and no. Is *Don Giovanni* an opera about a Spanish libertine? Does the Ninth Symphony celebrate the brotherhood of man? Is Velasquez's *Surrender at Breda* a historical painting? Yes and no; yes and no; yes and no. The 'yes' answer is correct in the same sense as the statement that the earth is one of the planets. It is one of the planets, but to an earth dweller it does not feel like one: there is so much more to say, a myriad qualities to add, which swamp the mere definition.

The analogy is one to which the critic of the arts must keep coming back: a great work resembles an animated world that is perceived and inhabited by the beholder. It is various, extensive, treacherous, perfectly still and yet in constant motion. Like the moon seen from a vehicle, it follows one about while looking down with indifference. The masterpiece mirrors the mind of one man and of all men; it annoys, delights, instructs, and sometimes preaches, though it contradicts itself and other revelations equally true; it shapes the conduct of multitudes who have never so much as heard of it, and it is often powerless to improve the behaviour of those who study and believe its message. It was created out of nothing, but pieces of other worlds lie embedded in it like meteorites; it is the cause of endless unimaginable creations after itself, yet its own existence is so precarious that its survival often suggests miraculous intervention through the agency of fools and thieves. It seems to have neither purpose nor utility, though it commands veneration, it bestows money and prestige, and it arouses a hunger that some find insatiable.

This and much else is the fluid phenomenon named Art, which we try to decant into our little individual flasks of consciousness with the aid of words. The attempt must seem hopeless until we remember that it is quite like another task which we have no option but to perform—the task of organizing the experience of living. We begin this second task as soon as we learn to talk, and the volume of words which comes out thereafter shows how necessary we feel discourse to be, even about familiar acts. But the words by which we capture the flux of life were not given mankind ready-made. Hard as it is to believe, the best words, like the worst clichés, had to be invented; they were once strange and fresh; and the entire charting of our perceptions, from stomachache to religious ecstasy, had to be made bit by bit like a geodetic survey. The coverage is by now so extensive that we forget its historical growth, its slow progress towards sharper and sharper analysis. We come to believe that every experience for which we have a word, be it heartburn, hypocrisy, or ambivalence, was a plain fact from the beginning. Nothing could be further from the truth. Each piece of reality had to be carved out from all its neighbouring parts, had to be named, and the name elaborately explained until it became a commonplace. I mentioned 'ambivalence' to give an example of recent carving and naming: in many places the word and the fact would not be as readily understood as the word and the fact of hypocrisy, while these in turn would in primitive circles be less intelligible than heartburn.

The point of these commonplace truths is that if we agree to see art as a source of meaning, something like the carving and naming of experience has to take place. Something *like* it, rather than something identical with it, for we have not yet

considered the way art and life are related, nor the kinds of words that can apply to each. And before we can be critics we must be clear about these relations. Life, art, discourse—an eternal triangle in which it is difficult to avoid mistaking parts, as we discovered in dealing with literature: we mistake words for things and knowledge for information. We can err in the same way about life and suppose that it is made up, simply, of all the things named in the dictionary. The truth is, the experience of life is not by any means exhaustively rendered by words. We have, for example, the word 'anger', but each angry man, each bout of anger, is in some respects unlike any other. The common words by which to mark those differences soon run out. We feel about *our* anger, or that of our friends, or about any vivid example of an enemy's anger, an inexpressible immediacy and richness that overflows the poor word. What do we do about that? We turn to art. We refer to Achilles's rage, to the furies, to Othello, or to any other creations that we have 'experienced' as if they embodied those fireworks of feeling erupting from the abstract core of human anger. But it is not because Shakespeare copies, it is because he discriminates and distills that we go to him for an extension of awareness. He—or any artist—enlarges the scope of our perceptions without throwing us back into the total stream. For one thing, the choice of a single medium, such as words, or paint, brings clarification. Through it the artist gives us not life but equivalent sensations sorted out. There is no anger in the stage Othello nor in ourselves watching him. I should in fact be willing to define art in relation to life as 'equivalent sensation'; it being understood that in a work of art the sensations are purposefully organized.

But contrary to a prevalent notion it is not the organizing that is fundamental, or else we could take no pleasure in fragments of ancient sculpture. The fundamental thing is that the fragment speaks to us. In colour and texture it is as unlike flesh as can be, but the equivalence intended by the human fashioner still holds for a human observer.

In order words, the several arts compel the different materials at hand to serve the curious purpose of producing sensations that we recognize as commentaries on our existence. By habit or convention some of these materials seem to be 'closer' than others to the original impressions of life, but this is merely habit or convention. 'Closer' has no meaning here. Stone is not closer to flesh than word is to thing. Just think of the immense diversity of words used in different languages for the same things, the great diversity of styles used in the graphic arts for the creation of life-likeness, and the enormously rapid change in musical taste without much change in the effect produced on human beings. The means of artistic communication are infinite, and a tapestry is as lifelike as a ballet. If I were asked to illustrate the situation of the arts in relation to life, I should create a sort of seven-layer cake, with a large ineffable fruit in the exact centre. From this a single strong flavour irradiates the whole confection. Each layer is one of the arts, and it tastes different by virtue of the different filler within; but all draw a common sweetness and nutritious force from the central fruit. We can eat our slice and have it too, for it grows back magically—art is inexhaustible. But the fruit is to most of us out of reach; much of the time we taste it through art alone, which in the broad sense that includes language is the conveyer, distiller and organizer of life *par excellence*.

III

It would be easy but highhanded to argue that since this is true of the arts and since music is an art, music must also present an equivalence of life. Many would continue to doubt the validity of the reasoning, or at least would puzzle over the connexion. 'Does he really mean to say,' they would ask themselves, 'that music embodies anger, or manifests hypocrisy? Why, I thought he admitted that music doesn't tell us anything. Of course, he did say that literature doesn't tell us anything either: it's all very confusing.' I am glad you remembered literature because what was asserted of it was that it speaks to us *by virtue* of not being literal. So does music, as I hope an example will make clear. In the opening bars of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, we are given sensations contrived in such a way that the ear—the thinking ear, that is—remains uncertain of the tonality, the direction, the fulfilment of the sounds. This is protracted until the *tutti* comes crashing down upon us in D Minor and all doubts are at an end. This is a favourite effect of Beethoven's, another instance being the transition from the Scherzo to the finale of the Fifth.

Now, why is it 'an effect'—an affecting thing? Why do we respond to it, and respond to it, I should imagine, all alike even though it may cause annoyance to some and pleasure to others? The impression as a whole has no name, and no good would be served by calling it Resolution of Uncertainty. Any such term is limiting, literal, and—you may properly add—unmusical. Just so: music is a medium through which certain unnameable experiences of life are exquisitely conveyed through equivalent sensations for the ear. As Mr. Roger Sessions has admirably put it: 'Emotion is specific, individual, and conscious; music goes deeper than this, to the energies which animate our psychic life . . . It reproduces for us the most intimate essence, the tempo, and the energy of our spiritual being; our tranquillity and our restlessness, our animation and our discouragement . . . —all, in fact, of the fine shades . . . of our inner life.'⁴

I would qualify this statement in only one way, by pointing out that although music is not like, nor about, nameable emotions, being neither literal nor abstract, it has a way of interweaving itself with some of our perceptions that do have names, and so tempts us to tag the music with the experience of which we are reminded. This accounts for the programmatizing, the naming of pieces large and small, and the inevitable amateur comments about passages that are like sunset on the Matterhorn or the kiss of an archangel. Notice that these analogies are usually with the rare and the fanciful, precisely because they are not readily nameable in spite of their vividness and intimacy. If you should ask, 'what is the kiss of an archangel like?' you would probably be told, 'It's just like the close of the *Siegfried Idyll*.'

The fact that music begins to speak to us at the point where words stop accounts also for something rather more important and certainly more aboriginal—the fact that articulate and inarticulate sounds can combine to form one meaning, the fact that songs can be composed and understood. If a good judge can say that one

⁴ *The Message of the Composer*, in *The Intent of the Artist*, edited by A. Centeno (Princeton, 1941), pp. 123–4.

setting of given words is better than another, it is not merely because one tune is better adapted to the conventional accent of those words but also because it wraps itself more snugly around their significance. We appreciate this in reverse when we remark that the *Star-Spangled Banner* is a tune somewhat wanting in martial fire and ill-adapted to the patriotic feeling of the words. When we know that its traditional form was that of a convivial song *To Anacreon in Heaven*, we recognize its fitness to that theme and discover that the awkward wandering of the notes turns from blemish to expressiveness.

Music's same power to present the sensations missing from the verbal signs of an experience explains why as a general rule the text of the best songs and operas is inferior in its kind to the musical setting. A great poem is complete in itself and needs no additions from another art. Great music is complete in itself, and only a disagreeable overlap of intentions can result from its being harnessed to great literature. Fortunately, many musicians have shown a certain indifference to poetic expression and thus have expended their powers on verse that was literal and required to be made into art. We then enjoy both the independent beauty of the music and the pleasure of its adaptation to a rudimentary conception in words.

This rudimentary conception is still with us, of course, in instrumental music, to which we must return as the true test of our entire theory. For music has taken rank among the high arts by virtue of its relatively recent emergence as a presentment that can stand by itself: all its claims to absoluteness and disconnexion from life rest on the fact that intelligent people will sit silent and motionless for twenty minutes while upwards of a hundred men blow and scrape 'meaningless' notes.

When the noise has subsided, the audience are heard to say whether the new piece has merit or whether the old one was played right. Obviously they are comparing the flood of sensations with a pre-existing pattern in their minds or memories, a pattern to which they readily ascribe a value akin to revelation as well as the power of producing pleasure. The sensations offered are extraordinarily complex and the receiving mind must be extraordinarily acute, for it sometimes happens that all the notes of a familiar piece are played in the right order at the right speed, and yet good judges declare they could hardly recognize the work. It lacked force or coherence or was subtly bereft of its accustomed virtue. This fairly usual experience surely goes to prove that music communicates something beyond the relation of its audible parts. It conveys a meaning which some people catch and others not; a meaning which is not *in* the notes, since these can be played correctly and yet meaninglessly; a meaning which is not universally intelligible, since listeners vary in their judgment of composers, of works, of performances; a meaning which like verbal meaning depends on a mass of previous knowledge and feeling.

This last truth is not merely one of common observation, it has also been the subject of experiment. The classic statement of the results is that of Dr. Philip Vernon, a British musician and psychologist, who twenty years ago subjected the Cambridge Musical Society to a series of tests proving conclusively that to consider music a purely auditory experience is contrary to fact. His report should be read and

pondered by every amateur or professional listener who believes that, whatever vulgar souls may do, his own pleasure in the art is the contemplation of pure form. The facts are so enlightening, and so amusing besides, that I have reprinted Dr. Vernon's article in the anthology to which I referred earlier. The honest reader cannot fail to recognize how much that is commonly deemed non-musical goes into intelligent listening.

The reason for this paradox is that on his side, the artist-composer, even while he attends to the demands of his material or to his formal design, consciously or unconsciously endows the familiar elements with qualities that also correspond to his grasp of life as a whole. The order in which he puts things, the things he repeats and the things he avoids; the suggestions, emphases, and climaxes; the pace of his thought and the intensity of his will; the stops, the false starts, the crashes, and the silences—everything he does or leaves undone—is a signal to the listening mind that recalls to it the qualities of life. The composer has probably no intention of being autobiographical; he may indeed be a dramatist composing the wordless biography of some imaginary being, like Mozart depicting Figaro or the Queen of the Night; but the concourse of sounds is as surely the equivalent of a lived experience as are the lines of an expressive face or the gestures of an inspired actor.

The conclusion is inescapable that musical meaning relates to the existence of the creature that man is, not solely because music delights man, and not solely because he assigns to it a value beyond mere delight, but because it requires from him a special attention to particulars within and without his own mind. He must, as we say, understand the idiom, that is, he must record and relate the multitude of sensations aroused in him, and so make them into food for his soul.

IV

It follows readily enough that what the artist has put together, the critic can take apart and restate in the foreign tongue of prose discourse. In doing this, he is really doing no more than accounting to himself and to others for what he has undergone. The critic may, for example, ask himself how it is that some works using the devices of modulation, cadence, etc., according to rule, are nonetheless unbearably dull; whereas others are not only agreeable but great? One composer, we say, has good or great ideas, another has not. But this is to repeat the fact without explaining it. The ideas we refer to are obviously something else than clever tricks for linking the common elements of the medium, though this cleverness is not to be despised when, as we also say, there is a *point* to it. And the point is always something larger than devices and the linking of devices; for we can recognize the presence of genuine ideas at both extremes of technical knowledge: Bach is not a great composer because he was adept at counterpoint, but because he had a purpose in using it. Gluck is a great composer despite his clumsiness of technique—if art that is successful can ever be called clumsy. Both equally served an intention that we can recover and rejoice in. When we receive a communication we value, it is idle to carp at the means employed, art being the first and truest pragmatism.

But criticism immediately asks how a diversity of means can achieve similar results. This remains a complete mystery unless we admit the proposition to which our long argument has been leading, namely, that the 'point' of speech or music or art is to summon up and shape the stuff of human experience. Anything we understand, we understand in the light of human experience, actual or potential. We must bring our little share of wisdom and remembered life with us, and pour it into the given mould, or else remain deaf and dumb to messages the most heavenly; since, as we know, neither words, nor paint, nor music nor science can take up and unload at our feet the full cargo of even the smallest portion of reality.

For 'potential experience' we have the word Imagination, and it is this faculty that the artist possesses in great strength and uses to spur our own. By a combination of instinct and design he so orders the elements of his art that the interplay of resulting sensations produces a decipherable code to new meanings. Our attention is arrested and sustained. The stream of impressions holds us because it refers to our past and future being, to our conscious or submerged memories, to our anxieties and our purposes; it arouses and satisfies our expectations on all planes, from rhythmic sympathy with our heartbeat to flattering our ego by subtlety. When I say that the work of art, the musical masterpiece, does all this, I mean that in any given instance it may do some or all of these things. At first, the very great work may appear to do none of them: it defies our expectations and unpleasantly disturbs our heartbeat. Our ego is flouted and our anxieties increased. We leave the concert hall muttering. But history has taught us that we should expose ourselves repeatedly to such icy showers of seemingly *non*-equivalent sensations until one of two things happens: either we reject the new alien world for good, or we adopt it by adapting to it. In gifted or determined devotees of art, adaptation comes easily, of course, but most of us need help, and even the gifted ones occasionally find themselves face to face with art that looks impossible to assimilate. It is to help digestion by resolving doubts and dispelling mysteries that criticism exists. The traditional belief that criticism is intended to separate the good from the bad seems to be a confusion between means and ends. It may at times be necessary to point out the bad, but only as a corollary to defining the character of a piece by imputing to it an intention that is bad, or an intention that is good but poorly executed. Again, those who maintain that criticism judges and gives grades for the sake of the artist's next performance mistake criticisms for teaching. Even the teacher might be said not so much to pass judgment as to show the pupil, like a critic, what the pupil's own work does and fails to do.

The role of critic is, in a word, to act as go-between, as midwife, between the artist's conception and the beholder's recognition of it in the created thing. The critic says: 'Where you see chaos, or possibly where you see nothing at all, there exists nevertheless a valuable entity. It has such and such features. Look at this, and again look at that. If you will but subject yourself to its influence once again, noting the truly salient parts, I will try to point out their connexion and their meaning. I will, in the fullest sense of the term, identify the object for you, so that you will never again misconceive its place and purport, nor mistake it for another or for a dead thing.'

Obviously, an undertaking so ambitious is never perfect or complete, which is why there can hardly be too much criticism—despite one's frequent feeling that there are too many critics. The remedy to this excess is to improve the quality of criticism by making stringent demands on those who criticize. In music particularly we should be very exacting, and also very receptive, because music criticism is still in its infancy. Indeed we may pray that its puniness is not a sign of stunted growth, due to the impediments of prejudice and false belief that it has encountered and that I have been enumerating. Their removal is prerequisite to critical performance because otherwise the common goal of all critics is hidden from the musician by his own self-righteousness: he denies the possibility expressed in the title of our discussion. And yet, still, notwithstanding, the critic of music must, like the critic of literature, translate one kind of experience into another. To do so he must use words, for they are the most general medium of communication. And he is entitled to translate music into words because all the arts concern themselves with one central subject matter, which is the stream of impressions, named and unnamed, that human beings call their life.

If he is himself at home in life, in music, and in words, the critic may rely on his readers' keeping in mind the difference between life and art and between words and music. His remarks will naturally replace literalism with significance, and will automatically show that meaning is always above and beyond the thing said. The stupidest man is brighter than any device of speech because he always finds more in it than a device. Establish that same happy relation between the naïve listener and music in general and you have got rid forever of the bugbear of 'programmatic' interpretation.

Remains the question of vocabulary. What words are appropriate to lead the listener into the neighbourhood of musical understanding and give him the push that will make him land in the very centre of direct perception? A full answer would amount to a manual of critical practice. Here I can only sketch out a few general principles, most of them implicit in all that you have heard. First, the criticism of music, like that of the other arts, must be written for the layman; an educated layman if possible, but a layman and not a professor. The educated reader may be expected to pick up some rudiments of terminology; that is all he knows and all he needs to know. Technical terms are used in criticism simply to point to a part of the work. Just as in a painting we draw attention to a 'patch of cobalt blue in the middle distance', so we may refer in a piece of music to the cadence, the *tutti*, the arpeggios, or the second subject. Beyond this the critic must reserve his profundities for the learned journals, exactly as the literary scholar reserves his discussion of acatalectic meters and double syllepsis. All these matters have importance for the trade, not for the public.

Having singled out the parts that he considers noteworthy, the critic then explains what makes them so. Here he uses ordinary words and the range of possible phraseology is infinite. No one can predict what type of commentary will enlighten a particular mind, though it is safe to say that a critic ought to be aware of current doctrines and superstitions, whether or not he takes one of these as a text for his

sermon. He should ideally begin where the unaided listener left off—in bewilderment if the work was new and difficult but well spoken of; in horror if it was new and badly spoken of. The critic begins in some familiar key and modulates to his own pre-arranged full close.

In the course of this exercise nothing is *a priori* excluded. Provided they are themselves intelligible at sight, the facts of history, biography, psychology, poetry, architecture, or of any art or science may be equally relevant. Analogies may be drawn from the workshop or the boudoir, provided always that anything said really makes a point, that the point is anchored to some precise part of the given musical experience, and that interest attaches to the remark or thesis for people who care about art and life.

This is a tall order and the record shows that it cannot be carried out without recourse to a device I have just mentioned—analogy. The justification for this need not be argued again, for you are (I hope) convinced that in this world things may be alike, though no more than alike. We may say of any group of things: A is to B as C is to D. The statement of a bold critic long ago that the overture to *Figaro* was like champagne, means the sensation in my palate when I drink the celebrated wine resembles the sensation in my ears when I listen to the celebrated overture. The analogy might of course be boiled down to the single adjective 'sparkling', but words of this convenient sort tend to lose their sharpness by over use. They do not discriminate sufficiently deep and break down under the strain of building up more elaborate analyses. Hence the obligation for critics to keep inventing metaphors and employing their very strangeness to force attention upon what is deemed the critical point.

Analogy is of course not without danger. It can impart an indelible character to the work or the passage it seeks to illuminate. Much nineteenth-century music suffers from having a certain kind of poetical character thus stamped upon it. The *Moonlight Sonata*, the *Pathétique*, the *Appassionata*, have almost become trite through their label, as if the suggestiveness of the music were imprisoned beneath. Perhaps the most striking example is that of Berlioz's *Fantastic Symphony*, in which five movements differing markedly in atmosphere are heard and spoken of as if all were demonic like the last; the result being that the *Adagio*, one of the loveliest of pastoral movements, hardly penetrates the mind-hardened eardrum. Such misconceptions are perhaps inevitable; they do result from criticism, and better criticism is the only antidote. The mishap only reinforces the need for the best criticism we can produce—informed, sensitive, and above all explicit; criticism fit to reconcile the tone-deaf and raise the spirits of the frightened Philistine, as well as enchant those who do not need it.

The existence of such criticism matters not only to artists and amateurs but to society at large. In a civilization as old and changeful as ours there is a constant movement between art and social thought. Ideas, attitudes, models for the physique and for the mind, come from the hand of the artist and are popularized by critics. New forms arise as the old filter downwards. This is what Shelley meant when

he called poets 'the unacknowledged legislators of the world'. And music's effect is surely as strong as poetry's, acting as it does on the nerves and the very bowels of mankind. But because the art is wonderfully complex in its higher reaches, its action is more uncertain and diffuse. It takes the critic speaking the speech of the literate man to arouse in that man the desire for music new and strange, and to ease the road to pleasure through that desire.

The goal for the critic to keep steadily in view is that of significance. It is meaning that makes sensations cohere, meaning that rewards and justifies the groping eye, ear, mind. In this first half century we have assimilated, among other things, primitive sculpture and non-objective art; in the previous century, a band of geniuses conquered inanimate nature itself as a realm of art—the literal God of thunder had long departed and nature was mute; but now the mountain echoes began to speak ethics and esthetics and to inspire masterpieces in their own image. There is no reason why in the next half century the meaning of music should not become just as well understood as that of the eternal hills. If the critics seek the way, this civilizing effort will not prove a superhuman task, despite the relative backwardness of discourse about music. The language of criticism by which we assimilate and assess literature was not found ready-made. It had to be invented, phrase by phrase and term by term. And so it must be for music. Once made and tested by public use, the critic's grammar and vocabulary are available to all for their several purposes. Music will then no longer be a thing apart, jealously or scornfully cut off from the total sphere of pleasure and significance. At that time the problem that has occupied us will no longer be a stumbling-block. Every literate being will feel as free to translate music into words as he now is to translate love, religion, the joy of living, or the spectacle of nature. It will then be a platitude rather than a heresy to say with Hazlitt: 'We listen to the notes of a thrush with delight from the circumstance not only of sound, but of seasons, of solitude, the recollections of a country life, and of our own'.

And lastly, under that dispensation, the false division with which we had to start, of sheep and goats using the words 'literary' and 'musical' as terms of faint abuse or misplaced pride—that division will abolish itself, and all persons with artistic feelers of whatever kind will share equally the blessings of a common tongue.

The International Music Association



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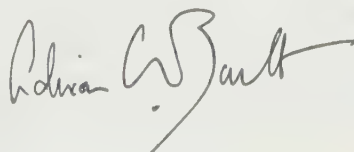
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International Music Association

'What's in a name' ? says Shakespeare, and yet it would be difficult to think of the *International Music Association* by any other name; all three words mean exactly what they should mean, and together they make up something vital and, we hope, permanently valuable, if not indispensable.

Its idea, like so many ideas, evolved in the minds of many musicians and amateurs almost at the same time, and when it was first suggested to me I was naturally impressed, and happy to come to a meeting in its support. But it was not until Mrs. Strickland Hubbard and her son, Mr. Anthony Hubbard, had met and pondered over the scheme that their immense generosity enabled so many of the ideals of the I.M.A. to be realized all together with the establishment of the Centre in South Audley Street, and soon after, a development of the International side of the Association which will, we hope, have far-reaching and valuable results. The Memorandum of Association, as usual in such documents, shows many and varied objects for the Association, but even the most optimistic of us could hardly have expected so many of them to be realized in so short a time. The International Conference, and the contacts that have sprung from it; the Student Award and the opportunities it has opened up; the many valued uses that have been found for our delightful Concert Hall; and, above all, the wonderful amenities of the Club, are realizations of many dreams, and are now facts which are widely used and immensely appreciated.



International Conference

The first Conference of the International Advisory Committee was held at the I.M.A. Club from March 9 to March 12, 1954. It was attended by the following members from abroad:

Professor Necil Akse (Turkey)	Willem Andriessen (Holland)
Michael Bowles (New Zealand)	Marcel Cuvelier (Belgium)
Claude Delvincourt (France)	Klaus Egge (Norway)
Professor Maurits Frank (Germany)	Roger Hollinrake (New Zealand)
Dr. Bernet Kempers (Holland)	S. Kondrashev (U.S.S.R.)
Marjan Kozina (Yugoslavia)	Robert Oboussier (Switzerland)
Knudaage Riisager (Denmark)	Miss Soini (Finland)
Professor Oiva Soini (Finland)	Eugene Goossens (Australia)

Home members:

Sir Adrian Boulton (President)	Mrs. C. Strickland Hubbard
Anthony Hubbard (Life Governor)	(Life Governor)
Sir Reginald Thatcher (Vice-President)	Sir Ernest Bullock (Vice-President)
Douglas Gamley	Owen Mase (Chairman)
R. D. Gibson	Miss Cicely Hoyer
L. H. F. Liddall	Charles Mackerras
Mrs. John Nowell	Dr. José Payan
C. F. G. Puritz	Col. The Hon. James Smith
Michael Whewell	

The President described the aims of the I.M.A., which may be summarized as follows:

1. To promote close co-operation amongst the nations of the world in all matters relating to music.
2. To promote the interchange of music students who have completed or are about to complete their training and who show promise of reaching an international standard as executants.
3. To provide an attractive centre where musicians of every nationality can meet and feel at home, and where they can get good food and drink at reasonable prices.
4. To provide information about the music and musicians of each country, and to make this available to all who want it.

Of these aims, No. 3 had been realized through the generosity of Anthony Hubbard and Mrs. C. Strickland Hubbard, a beginning had been made towards realizing No. 2 through the I.M.A. Concert Award, and No. 4 had become a regular service. It was in order to pay close attention to No. 1 that the Conference had been called; and in the hope that an International Music Association might spring up in every country, after the pattern of the one already established in London.



Entrance Hall of the I.M.A. Club



The Lounge



The Dining Room

All the members from abroad spoke of the musical conditions in their own countries and it was apparent that the formation of an I.M.A. would have to be approached in different ways in each case. Towards the close of the Conference, however, certain points were unanimously agreed upon.

1. Members from abroad would explore without delay the best and quickest means of establishing an I.M.A. in their own countries.
 2. They would keep the I.M.A. in London informed of their progress, and all I.M.A.s when started would do their best to keep in close touch with each other. To help in this, each member from abroad would be supplied with the names and addresses of the others.
 3. A member of one I.M.A. would automatically become a member of every other I.M.A.; and the title 'I.M.A.' should as far as possible be universally adopted.
 4. The brochures eventually to be published by each I.M.A. would give the addresses of all other I.M.A.s, so that musicians would know where to find their 'home' in whatever country they might be.
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Here are some extracts from an article entitled *The House of Music*, written by the Danish composer, Knudaage Riisager, on returning home from the Conference.

'Every young artist who has travelled in foreign countries knows how difficult it is to establish the right contacts, speak freely to colleagues, meet the people so useful as connexions, find a place to practise, study the details of concert-giving and many other things. At the I.M.A. club in London, all this is made easy. Once accepted as a member, all doors seem open to any such student, as well as to those who are internationally famous. During the recent Conference it was agreed by all the delegates that each one of them would try to create a similar institution in his own country, and that a member of one I.M.A. should automatically be a member of all the others. What this would mean in practice is easy to understand.

'Let us suppose that a young Danish artist, a violinist, who has already here at home established his ability and gained some reputation, comes to London to continue studying or perhaps to give a concert. Nobody knows him and no one will give him an opportunity to show what he can do, he or she has no connexions, money is scarce, restaurant life is expensive and the food too poor at the cheaper restaurants. What does he do? Simply goes along to the I.M.A., provided with an introduction from his own country's I.M.A.—and until this is established, to the local connexion the British I.M.A. may have got—and enters the club in South Audley Street where he will be received by one of the many Secretaries and introduced into the house. He can then invite the right people to a small presentation concert. He can practise in one of the sound-insulated rooms, meet his colleagues, have his meals in the restaurant, and so on. He can rest assured that it is the right people who will hear him, the right colleagues he will meet.

'Fifteen countries were represented at the meetings in London, which shows how far things have progressed. Strangely enough Sweden had not reacted to the invitation, and it is entirely due to personal initiative that Denmark was there at all. (There is every reason to think—by the way—that for instance the Norwegian Government attaches much more importance to cultural enterprises of this kind than we can ever expect from the Danish Government. That is one of the reasons why recent Norwegian music is much better known abroad than the Danish, and why Norwegian artists more often receive engagements.)

'What follows now? Will it be possible to realize the aims put forward at the Conference, or is this noble idea of an I.M.A. to be an isolated British phenomenon? As such, this house of music would of course remain important as a home for British and visiting musicians; but the underlying idea is larger than that: it is to bring musicians everywhere together in friendship, and so spread concord and harmony in a world which in so many domains is in discord and distress. It is not without importance to mention that an unambiguous promise was given by the U.S.S.R. to join. France and Germany promised to do the same. The big problem for the smaller countries will be the financing of a house and a restaurant. I think, for that matter, it would be a good business proposition; it has certainly become so in London, for the restaurant is crowded all day. Can we from Denmark join? That is the question. Or shall we lag behind also in this matter and remain entrenched in our own little house of music, whose windows already open too little upon the world?'

THE I.M.A. CONCERT AWARD

This Award is competed for annually. The winner gives a recital in the Concert Room of the I.M.A. Club before an invited audience of musicians and critics, and is also offered concerts in such centres as Brussels and Amsterdam, and a broadcast recital by the B.B.C. It is hoped that other countries will be able before long to arrange a reciprocal visit to London of their own outstanding young executants.

The method of selecting the winner of the Award is by audition before a panel of well-known musicians, those this year being Clifford Curzon, William Glock, Scott Goddard, Gerald Moore, Manoug Parikian and Evelyn Rothwell. In 1953 the award was made to a young pianist. This year there was a large number of entries and many good young executants were heard, but none quite reached the standard necessary to win the award. The standard is high, but the Association is confident that it is in the interests of all that it should be so.

Details of the Award can be obtained from the Secretary-General of the I.M.A. Entries must be received by December 31, and the Award takes place during the following February.

‘NELSON’: SOME HINTS TO LIBRETTISTS

Anyone connected in any way with the creation of music has an infinity of teachers and text-books to learn from—except only the poor opera librettist, who generally has to plunge into his formidable task without the smallest training for it. At the best no one can give him anything but negative counsel, suggest to him, by a series of post-mortems on notable failures in the past, not so much what he ought to do as what he must not on any account do. Even a little help of this kind might have saved the librettists of *Tosca* from making the mess they have done of Sardou's skilfully-constructed drama; and some such warning counsellor might have helped da Ponte to provide Mozart with a better substructure for his *Don Giovanni* than the present text-book, which is one of the sorriest pieces of stage joinery ever nailed together by a hack in a hurry.

The first piece of advice I myself would timidly venture to offer the intending librettist is this—avoid, and, if you can, shoo your composer away from great historical characters, who were primarily men of action—Napoleon, let us say, or, with our eyes just now on Sadler's Wells, *Nelson*.¹ The limning of such beings as these does not lie within the powers of music. Don't imagine that you have side-stepped the problem by bringing in a 'love interest'; on your composer will still rest the onus of persuading us that the lover we see on the stage has some real connexion with the historical man of action beyond the name you have chosen to tab on him.

It is all very well to tell us that the theme of the new opera at Sadler's Wells is 'the struggle between love and duty as exemplified in Nelson's life'. But is it? The work is obviously connected with the great admiral by virtue of the patched eye and the empty sleeve and such episodes as that final moving one in the cockpit of the *Victory*; but if there is any further connexion it has evaded me. Is there not a touch of the *ad captandum* in this operatic use of a great man's name and physical appearance?

What finally matters in an opera is the quality of the music. If this is great in itself it really does not matter much what names the composer has chosen to give his two leading characters, or his temporal and geographical location of them. He can, if he chooses, set the action in a mythical antiquity and endow the actors with names of pure romance. Or he can equally well place them in a *milieu* of today, depicting the 'struggle between love and duty' not as an affair of Napoleon-Josephine or Horatio-Emma, but as taking place in the soul of one Horace Protheroe, of Heckmondwike, *vis-à-vis* a certain Amelia Entwistle of Dewsbury.

If the composer invites me to play the game with him on a time-and-space plane of his own invention I will do so willingly, merely stipulating that my final attitude towards his work shall be determined by the excellence or lack of excellence of his music. What I jib at is being asked to take part in a game in which it is open to the composer to get credit for something with which he has no right to credit himself—that is to say, I am expected to read into the character set before me on the stage all that history and biography have told me about the great entity we know as Nelson or Napoleon the man of action. This I regard as getting my admiration under false pretences. In the old days a man who had been guilty of some little misdemeanour or other could escape justice by pleading benefit of clergy. Are we to let a not wholly successful opera composer off on the plea of benefit of biography?

There are one or two other counsels that we observers might presume to offer a librettist. One would be: 'Keep an extra sharp eye on your first scene or two'. Obviously here you are only setting the table, not serving the banquet; and your prime concern is to kindle our appetite for what is coming without unduly anticipating the satisfaction of it. Manifestly it would be imprudent of you to introduce us to your leading characters at the moment of the rising of the curtain. You will feel that some preliminary work has to be done to suggest the *milieu* and the atmosphere of the work; so you start off with the chatter of one or two minor characters. But please reflect that even that chatter should have a certain organic relevance to what is to follow.

¹ The first performance of Lennox Berkeley's opera, *Nelson*, was given at Sadler's Wells on September 22.

Already, in fact, your troubles have begun; you are faced with the double problem of (a) making these supernumeraries 'live' in their own right for the moment, and (b) deciding what, if anything, you are going to do with them later when the main action is in full flood. Yes, that first scene calls for expert handling, as any critical spectator of *Nelson* will no doubt have concluded.

Then there will come the grave questions of the kind of diction you are going to choose for your libretto, and what measures you and your composer propose to adopt to ensure that the text shall always be the vital matter for the spectator that it was for you. Our librettists have a bad tradition to fight; our ordinary operatic repertory having been so long predominantly foreign, we had for a long time to put up with translations, many of which were no more than reasonably efficient hackwork, in an idiom that came to be known contemptuously as 'librettists' English'. Our advice to the would-be librettist, therefore, has to be in large part negative.

One's first piece of advice must be to warn him against polysyllabic words in general, for music, with its more leisurely pace than speech, does not take to these kindly. Next, he can save himself the trouble of weaving intricate metrical patterns for their own poetic sakes. The composer cannot be bothered with these; his sole concern is with his musical pattern. Anyone who wishes to go more closely into this matter might begin with a study of *Otello* in Boïto's text and in Verdi's score; he will find the composer making mincemeat of the poet's artfully-planned caesuras, run-on lines, broken rhymes and so on whenever they stand in the way of his desire for a continuous vocal phrase. The poet's ingeniosities in his own craft have been pure waste of effort on Boïto's part.

Let the librettist, too, be for ever asking himself not 'How does this or that passage read in the study?' but 'How will it fare in conjunction with music in the theatre?' For music so heightens the sensitivities of the listener as to cause a more searching light than normally to play upon the words, with the result that many a phrase which we would take unnoticingly in our stride in ordinary speech or during silent reading may become undesignedly comic when heard in connexion with a musical texture.

'Don't be flowery' is another piece of advice which the librettist would do well to bear in mind. It is difficult for us, when we are following a musical train of thought, to take in complex or extended poetic imagery. Even Mr. Alan Pryce-Jones, a man of culture and taste, whose *Nelson* libretto is in the main an excellent piece of work, has once or twice been unable to resist the temptation to write in a more 'literary' style than music requires. We find his Mrs. Cadogan, for instance, addressing her caged bird in this wise: 'Ah, little bird, the plaited wires | Stand guard upon your voyagings: | All dreams and conquests and desires | Lie cabined in the voice that sings, | And love itself a captive tires | And droops with folded wings.' This strikes the listener as only a too consciously decorative way of saying 'Ah, you can't get out, Dicky'.

One's general advice to the too poetically-inclined librettist should be, I think, that of Ovid's Daedalus to Icarus when the pair were about to set out on the first gallant experiment in aviation: 'Don't fly so low that the sea will wet your wings and clog them, or so high that the sun will melt the wax. Take a middle course, my son: it will be safer in the end'. Speech too familiar and speech too high-falutin are equally risky in opera.

ERNEST NEWMAN

‘THE TURN OF THE SCREW’

We were already vaguely familiar in Italy with Henry James's novel from which Benjamin Britten has taken the subject of his latest opera; it had been translated into Italian, though when it came to the point the translation was found to be out of print. We knew, because people with some knowledge of American literature had told us so, that it was a masterpiece. While it remained a novel, no one had ever had any moral reservations about *The Turn of the Screw*. But when it was adapted for the opera stage the Italian public, and even writers and critics of discernment, suddenly began to have curious, prudish doubts. At the 17th International Festival of Contemporary Music at Venice one constantly heard people say that what was all very well in the pages of a novel was not necessarily so in the theatre, and still less so in opera. But nobody seemed able to give any very satisfactory reason for applying different moral standards to different branches of the arts.

Here one might well consider the effect of six years of clerical government in Italy, but that would be of no interest to the readers of *The Score*. I would only point out that for a Latin race *The Turn of the Screw* represents an attitude of mind as completely foreign to them as puritanism, upsetting both their habits of thought and their principles. The idea that Evil has a concrete, positive existence is almost inconceivable for a Latin people. For us, evil is primarily sin; it is the harm one does to one's neighbour, because it is so difficult, in this small, impoverished world, to live in harmony with other people; because one's own pleasure or advantage so often turns to sorrow and disadvantage for someone else.

But this obsession with disinterested evil for its own sake, as a principle in itself, is foreign to the Latin mind, and its existence is for us one of the mysteries which surround the North European. The Italian idea of realism, nourished on Boccaccio, was titillated and at the same time disappointed by the delicately-managed allusions with which James treated a rather doubtful subject. Those allusions become much more concrete in the hands of the composer and the librettist. Italians were slightly put out by so much being left unsaid, or not expressed in clear-cut images. At the same time they pretended to be scandalised by just those things that were unspoken, over which they let their imaginations run riot. *The Turn of the Screw* is simply the drama of lost innocence, something which comes to everyone, Latin and Anglo-Saxon alike, in every country, under every sky. The authors of the opera have even stressed this central meaning of the story by quoting a line of W. B. Yeats: 'The ceremony of innocence is drown'd', round which they have built a whole episode that is perhaps a little obvious. The way innocence is lost is purely a secondary matter of little interest. What is important for the composer is the ritual significance, the 'ceremony' of the loss of innocence, the actual circumstances being deliberately left in the background. The whole opera is music for that 'ceremony'.

In Italy we liked *Peter Grimes*, but looked in vain in Benjamin Britten's next two operas — *The Rape of Lucretia* and *Albert Herring* — for the true fulfilment of his promise as a composer of opera. We have not heard his more recent operas, but we read rather half-hearted and contradictory accounts of them, and came to the conclusion that the great success of *Peter Grimes* had not been repeated either in *Billy Budd*, *Gloriana*, the little opera for children, or in the new version of *The Beggar's Opera*. But now we can safely proclaim from Venice that in *The Turn of the Screw* Britten has written an opera, certainly less grandiose than *Peter Grimes*, but more perfect by very reason of its simplicity and its smaller proportions. Unfortunately I have not been able to study the score, but can only give you my impressions, confirmed and matured by two later performances.

For convenience I have grouped those impressions round three aspects of the work: the music of the words, the music for the orchestra, and the vocal part. Perhaps I should explain straight away what I mean by the 'music of the words' as distinct from what is sung. I mean the gift, which everyone must allow Benjamin Britten, of making the utmost use of the actual sound of the words, fitting them perfectly to musical sounds, not only so as to conform to the rules of prosody, but also actually to heighten the sense of the words. It is what one might call the 'philological' aspect of Britten's music. He is one of the very few musicians of our time who do not feel themselves restricted by words, but on the contrary find them a real aid to composition. Britten's music is really like a creeper, which needs some support to climb up, and for him, words provide that support. It's not

that Britten's music lacks structural or expressive strength, not that it needs a verbal commentary. What he needs is the *sound* of words, sounds which stimulate his musical invention.

This mastery over words reaches astonishing heights in some scenes of *The Turn of the Screw*, especially in the twelfth Variation (which is an exception in not being purely instrumental), where the ghost of Quint, the former valet, appears to the child Miles, to try and persuade him to steal the letter which the governess has written to his uncle. Here the music of the words shows real virtuosity, in the sarcastic accentuation of the word 'written' ('So, she has written') repeated several times; in the rhythm of the syllables 'easy to take . . . easy to take', and finally in the soft exhortation 'Take it . . . take it'. I think, as a matter of fact, that the composer, too, wanted to underline the brilliance of this passage: if I am not mistaken, each of the fifteen orchestral variations which link the scenes is dominated by one particular instrument (a drum in the first, a flute in the fifth, bells in the ninth, the piano in the thirteenth, etc.). But in this twelfth variation, quite exceptionally, the dominating element is the musical intonation of the words.

But that is only the most striking instance of Britten's mastery in the handling of words; we must not forget that nearly the whole of the opera is built on it: it is the perfect intonation of the words which gives it its wonderful flow, the natural quality of its periods, and the possibility of defining character in small, almost insignificant detail. The whole character of Mrs. Grose, the housekeeper, is built up in this way: she hardly ever 'sings', but her character emerges from the perfect fall of the words, which comes from the musical notes. Who could forget the tone of respect and tenderness with which the old housekeeper asks if she may kiss the young governess: 'May I take the liberty'?

But Britten knows perfectly well that one can't make an opera out of the perfect intonation of words. An opera has moments of climax, dramatic or lyrical peaks, where the music must necessarily sing out, where the studied declamation of words must take on melodic substance, unless it is to fall into the worst kind of musical drama, the sort of spectacle where one sits in vain through three whole acts, waiting for the music to flower. In *The Turn of the Screw*, more than in any of the operas which followed *Peter Grimes*, more, even, than in *Peter Grimes*, Britten has avoided the danger of giving us a beautiful frame without a picture, or a wonderfully garnished dish without any meat. At all the dramatic points of the opera, wherever the subject calls for true melodic invention, the composer seizes his opportunity. He invokes help from various quarters, he leans, one might say — he leans for support on something pre-existent to achieve the free flow of song. There are nursery rhymes, and children's songs that come from folklore; or it may be Britten's eclecticism which takes what it needs where it finds it.

Reminiscences crop up in the most unexpected places: for instance it is the melodic colouring of Moussorgsky which lends so much precocious gravity to Miles's phrases in his dialogue with the governess, at the end of the second scene of the second act (and in a general way, do not the two children often recall the sons of Boris Godounov?); there is an almost imperceptible echo of the apprentice's theme from the *Meistersinger* in the lullaby which Flora sings to her doll in the seventh scene of the first act; Verdi is often present, for instance in the dark colouring of Miss Jessel's part (third scene of the second act) and above all in the strange, sad song of Miles, a kind of childish improvisation on a Latin verb, which is more or less the *leit-motif* of the whole opera, and which conjures up at once the tense atmosphere of the Willow Song in *Otello*, where Desdemona is overcome by the sense of her approaching death.

They are never more than reminiscences, of course, never deliberate borrowings. It is, as I have just said, the need for support from something pre-existent which comes into function every time the composer feels that melodic creation is called for. We must admit that he is less at home here than when he is translating the sound and the sense of words into music. But one must immediately add that the force of Britten's personality has never been more clear than it is here in the way he unifies the various contributions he has taken. They are neither quick nor easy to identify, for the whole work has a homogeneous air, and Britten's unfailing taste always comes to his aid where there are hints of a lack of creative originality. One finds, however, outstanding passages of melodic invention, whenever they are needed, and they are perfectly adequate.

The third aspect of the opera, where Britten is once again perfectly at home, is the instrumental writing. What he manages to obtain from the thirteen solo instruments in his small orchestra is simply amazing: every nuance of action and character finds expression in the timbre of the instruments — the unearthly shudder of the ghosts, the children's carefree games, the open-hearted courage of the young governess, and the humble tenderness of the old servant. Here again there are many *tours de force*, examples of instrumental virtuosity, as in the first variation, which is built



The Governess and Peter Quint



The Governess and Miss Jessel

entirely round the drums; or the terrifying sound of the bells which runs through the ninth variation and the scene which follows, until it condenses into a kind of alarm-bell as the governess explains to the housekeeper the awful meaning of the litanies which the two small children sing with such an innocent air. But, as with the music of the words, what counts more than these occasional highlights is the unbroken, perfect texture of sound which the instrumental writing provides throughout the work. I should like to stress the quality of the orchestral variations that come between the scenes. The fact that all of them are variations on one theme, made up of two intervals, and that there is a shift of key with each variation, so as to reproduce the 'turn of the screw', does not impress one over-much. What is delightful is their dramatic effect, the extraordinary fitness of these orchestral interludes. They are never too long, and they are always connected with the action: they set the atmosphere for the next scene, and are never just arbitrary essays in pure music. In fact, these variations reduce to a minimum the main difficulty in modern opera, which since *Pelleas* and *Wozzeck*, seems always to take the form of short episodes, where musical duration is the same as the duration of the events on the stage. Hardly anyone nowadays knows how to construct a whole act, that is to say, to use music to isolate a period in time within which characters are built up. I should like just to mention the variation which I found the most memorable of the fifteen, the fifth, with its dashing *allegro* for flute and 'cello, rustic and slightly archaic in style, which leads up to the strange Latin Lesson in the schoolroom.

It is from the fourth scene onwards that one is aware of the high quality of the work. Until then things are only beginning: everything goes smoothly, the composer is very skilful, we have been charmed by the 'ceremony of courtesy' in the second scene, where the children rehearse bowing and curtsying to their new governess, but it has been nothing more than clever. The governess's aria at the beginning of the fourth scene, with its long melodic line over the quavering orchestra and the trilling of the flute, plunges us straight into real musical creation. It establishes the character of the governess, the figure who, along with Miles, emerges most clearly through the music. She is open, enthusiastic, a little quixotic, devoted to her profession: she is perhaps a little in love with the brilliant, worldly uncle who has charged her with the education of his nephew and niece; perhaps later even a little in love with the extraordinary Miles, whom she has to kill before she can break the sinister influence of Quint. She believes in all that is pure and noble, her active and courageous spirit is the spirit of Ellen Orford, the young teacher in *Peter Grimes*. This ability to stamp a familiar air on certain characters, a recognizable hall-mark, is a sure indication of the operatic promise of a composer.

But let me go on with the list of outstanding moments in this opera which, I repeat, is above all remarkable for its homogeneity and its continuous flow. There is the sixth scene, with the strange little song sung by Miles on 'Malo . . . malo', which opens frightening vistas on his precociousness, and on his capacity to go astray, to think and dream in a way which is far too deep for his age. I also liked the liturgical melisma which occurs when the ghost of Quint appears to Miles in the eighth scene, and becomes almost the *leit-motif* of his infatuation. Someone was shocked by its oriental sound, but it is really pure plainsong, and perhaps Britten is indulging here in a touch of anti-clerical malice. In the second scene of the second act, which opens with the luminous sound of bells, one should note the last dialogue between the governess and Miles, where his unnerving precociousness becomes clear as he sings a short song of Russian stamp, which is perfectly suited to the occasion. Nor can one easily forget the sombre colouring of the scene with Miss Jessel which follows, and the striking dialogue between Miles and the governess. As a matter of fact, from here onwards everything in the opera is on a high level: no musician could fail to admire the ingenious scene at the piano, where children's sonatinas, the exercises and the showy passages played by Miles are all satirized and brilliantly deformed by polytonal distortion. But in the last scene, too, where the true nature of the drama is made plain — for it is the story of an exorcism — the music is equal to its task: a kind of lustreless funeral march accompanies the battle between Quint and the governess for the possession of Miles's soul.

The only doubtful part of the opera are the ghosts. It is obvious that in the opera they would have to speak, although in the novel they are silent. But one sometimes feels that they speak too much, that they are very talkative ghosts. It is as though, having created the characters, the composer felt he had to write in a 'part' for them. Quint's appearance to Miles, especially when he urges him to steal the letter, is very well done; so is the scene between Miss Jessel and the governess. But the first scene of the second act, where the two ghosts sing of their private affairs left me rather puzzled, in spite of the mounting effect of the duet 'The ceremony of innocence is drown'd'. One has the impression that both the composer and the librettist have condensed into this scene all the explanations and the symbolic ideas of the work, expressed in a slightly sententious and baroque melody which Britten makes too much play with.

I must naturally speak of the performance, but I should have to write just as much again to give some idea of its quality. It was so perfect, that, paradoxically, it almost harmed the opera: after the dress rehearsal we were all rather puzzled to know how much of our favourable impression came from the real merit of the work, and how much from the excellence of the interpretation. The thirteen players in the orchestra pit, conducted with an assured touch by the composer, and the singers on the stage, wonderfully produced by Basil Coleman, were beyond all praise. The fact that they sang without a prompter gave the whole thing such a natural air that one sometimes wondered whether they were singing together because it was written like that in the score, or whether they were simply improvising spontaneously. This was certainly the impression in the piano scene, where the housekeeper and the governess exchange surprised exclamations behind Miles's back. Miles was played by David Hemmings, a little boy about ten years old, whom one must naturally mention first. His thin, frail voice, perfectly in pitch, his measured gestures, his troubled air of immaturity coupled with precociousness, all this made for a memorable performance. He declaims with the assurance of a first-rate actor, and also with the freshness of a child. But the merits of this child prodigy do not detract from the quality of the adult singers, above all Peter Pears, Jennifer Vyvyan and Joan Cross. Pears's diction and his first-rate acting brought out all the nuances in the difficult part of Quint, the ghost, and also that primary quality of Britten's music, which is the way the musical sounds fit the sound and the sense of the words so perfectly. For me, Jennifer Vyvyan will always be the very incarnation of this type-character in Britten's opera, the young, open-hearted and enthusiastic young woman. One would like, too, to thank Joan Cross for the gentle spirit, the goodness and tact with which she endowed the part of the housekeeper, a character which, incidentally, is built up in the music by subtle, fresh touches that stand out all the more in a drama which skirts the very depths of evil. The fact that Jennifer Vyvyan and Joan Cross are excellent actresses should not make us forget their quality as singers, nor that of Arda Mandikian and Olive Dyer, the former dark and impressive as Miss Jessel, the latter hard put to it, in Flora's childish dresses, to equal the natural freshness of David Hemmings. She was particularly good in her proud rebellion in the last scene but one, and the tone of voice in which she shouted 'horrible' at the virtuous governess stays in one's mind. This is perhaps one of the moments where the hidden meaning of this singular opera is most plain — the opposition of two uncommunicating worlds: the normal world of grown-ups, and the fairy-tale world of children, peopled with phantoms and secret rites. Only music can come near to expressing the double reality of these parallel worlds, without first destroying it by analysis and reason. By the means which I have tried to describe, some completely original, some less so, Britten's music managed to do this, and that is why we greet *The Turn of the Screw* as a worthy successor to *Peter Grimes*.

MASSIMO MILA.

THE DARMSTADT SUMMER SCHOOL OF NEW MUSIC, 1954

The 1953 Darmstadt course was a melancholy affair. Most of the music that was played was already dead. What was not, was murdered. A strange sense of musical desolation enveloped everyone present; discussions withered on the branch, and even a roneo-ed manifesto directed against the extreme *avant-garde* and signed by a well-known Swiss composer failed to arouse much excitement.

This year it was all very different. The course had recovered the high standards of earlier years, and the concerts were consistently interesting (calamities included). Discussions, whether informal or otherwise, were lively, intelligent, and for the most part profitable.

Before turning to the new music heard at Darmstadt this year, a word should be said about performing standards. The concert artist who devotes himself almost exclusively to contemporary music is fortunately a rarity today; but he is by no means as rare as one would wish. He is the fellow who blithely remarks that in playing modern music, it is the spirit rather than the notes that matter — the assumption being that most people will notice the absence of the former whereas few will detect misdemeanours in regard to the latter. Needless to say, performers who subscribe to this view are incapable of observing either the spirit or the letter of most modern scores. They are not alone in their wilderness. The critics have similar difficulties. And so it comes about that inaccurate, unmusical, and downright bone-headed performances of 'difficult' modern scores are greeted with an indulgent nod, on the tacit understanding that anyone gallant enough to explore these arid wastes deserves all the sympathy he can get.

Bad performances breed more bad performances, and before long there grows up a legend that modern music is quite isolated from the music of the past, and must therefore be played in some special way — though heaven knows how. Hence the furrowed brows of those who cast their knowledge of traditional music to the winds, and approach the music of our own time in a spirit of complete self-abnegation — which they fondly imagine will bring them closer to the contemporary *zeitgeist*. It does not; and music played in this way will befog listeners who had believed that they understood something of the work in question, whilst confirming others in their suspicion that no one ever could. (I am thinking, for instance, of the slaughter of the Schoenberg quartets at Darmstadt last year.)

Those who were fortunate enough to attend the masterly piano classes held by Eduard Steuermann, or the no-less remarkable classes of Yvonne Loriod, at Darmstadt this year were able to observe that a musician of mature culture does not regard the music of today as something locked away from the past. Mlle. Loriod is naturally inclined to concentrate on music outside the Austro-German tradition, but she continually illustrated her remarks, at the piano, by drawing upon her vast knowledge of the classical and romantic repertoire. The majority of musicians in Steuermann's class brought with them piano music by Schoenberg — Steuermann being a pupil of that master, and his chosen interpreter. In guiding pianists through the music they had prepared, Steuermann was as catholic as Loriod in his choice of classical illustration. It was particularly interesting to hear him rehearse Stravinsky's *Capriccio* and *Two-piano Concerto* — works that are very remote from Steuermann's own aesthetic. He was forgivably misguided in certain aspects of his interpretation of the *Capriccio*, but everything that he said was worthy of the greatest respect. He amplified his remarks with illustrations from Bach, Weber and Chopin.

Steuermann's playing of some of Schoenberg's piano pieces in class was almost perfect — beautifully phrased, impeccably precise, and most deeply felt. In the concert hall at Darmstadt, where he played the complete piano works of Schoenberg, he was not always so successful — notably in opus 19. This would seem to suggest that he is not a concert artist by temperament. Nevertheless, his interpretation of Schoenberg on this occasion was far superior to anything that has been heard in England of recent years. It is incidentally worth recording that on Schoenberg's initiative he

departs at several points from the instructions contained in the published score. He does not play the misprints in opus 33a.

But to return to humbler levels of competence. It is obvious that so long as standards governing the performance of contemporary music remain chaotic, a composer has every chance of finding his work rendered almost meaningless by performers who are safe in the knowledge that the blame will be attached to the composer rather than to themselves. This was precisely the fate of the first new work heard at Darmstadt this year — the string quartet of Hans Zehden. The quartet made a very unfavourable impression. After a rather striking first movement that develops rhapsodically without alteration of texture or dynamics, the work became wholly incomprehensible. There seemed to be neither rhyme nor reason for anything. (The piece, though atonal, was clearly not twelve-tone.) Curious to know how this was possible from so intelligent and serious-minded a composer, I borrowed the score, and followed the same performance in a tape-recording. The cause of our bewilderment at once became obvious, for the performance was so completely inaccurate that the very structure of the work was shattered. Unhappily there is not space enough here to explain how this came about; but the discovery was a reminder that in passing an unfavourable judgement upon a new work, under the conditions that prevail today, one may, on occasion, be misled by the performance. For whilst some works will shine, albeit dimly, through a bad performance, others will sound no better than something quite insincere and untalented. It would, for instance, be impossible to give any opinion on Bruno Maderna's flute concerto, heard at Darmstadt this year, in view of the fact that the efforts of the excellent soloist were inaudible, thanks to the terror-stricken noises that issued from the orchestra as it struggled blindly with the composer's *pointilliste* scoring.

The new works given at Darmstadt can conveniently be discussed in order of difficulty. The only two out-and-out devotees of the common chord put up a sorry fight in their unfashionable cause. One piece, a *Kleine Serenade* for violin, clarinet and double bass, by Hans Eklund, was harmlessly juvenile; the other, a *Hommage à Milhaud* for flute and string quartet by Juriaan Andriessen, fulfilled the sinister expectations aroused by its title.

In the field of expanded tonality, there were likewise two composers — the Blacher-pupil Heimo Erbse, represented by a piano trio, and the Honegger-pupil Karel Husa, by his second string quartet. Apart from a fine *presto* movement, the Erbse work left an extraordinary impression of harmonic and rhythmic frustration. Was it the performance that was at fault? I am assured that it must have been.

Husa's vigorous and talented quartet is almost slavishly faithful to the structural procedures of Bartok, though the folk-element is nowhere discernable. The actual materials are unremarkable, and the tonal scheme is somewhat primitive, but the argument is exceedingly well-knit.

To pass from free tonal works such as these to equally free serial ones involves us in no great change of attitude. The two works by English-domiciled composers belong to the latter category. Don Banks's intensely musical *Violin Sonata* has already been competently noticed in this country. Showing the valuable influence of Banks's teacher Seiber, it was warmly received at Darmstadt. The same audience was less enthusiastic about Alexander Goehr's *Piano Sonata*.¹ My imperfect understanding of this work is partly — but only partly — excused by the fact that it was performed without *any* understanding whatever. With a work in which the sonorities are so sensitively calculated, the often complex rhythms so keenly felt, and the structure so precariously balanced, a performance as clumsy as this is frankly disastrous. I am prepared to believe that the sectional construction is more convincing than it seemed on this occasion; but how much more, I am unable to judge. Of one thing I am certain — and here the *avant-garde* would dissent vociferously: the sonata is one of the most truly original and progressive works heard at Darmstadt this year. It is immature, erratic, and a very incomplete work of art. But it is profuse with ideas, and consistently imaginative.

Two of the middle-of-the-way twelve-tone works were outstanding: a beautifully written, classically moulded flute sonata by Camillo Togni,² and a suite-like woodwind trio by Jacques Wildberger³ — a slighter piece, but unfailingly musical.

¹ Alexander Goehr. Born 1932 in Berlin, son of the conductor Walter Goehr. Has lived in England since 1933. Since 1951 has studied with Richard Hall in Manchester. Works include a song-cycle on words by Lord Byron, and a *Clarinet Fantasy*, besides the present piano sonata (written in 1953).

² Camillo Togni. Born in 1922 near Brescia. Studied composition with Casella and piano with Michelangeli. Has been composing according to the 12-note method since 1942. Works include *Homage to Bach* for two pianos, and a setting of the choruses from Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*.

³ Jacques Wildberger. Born in 1922 in Basel. Studied piano with Baumgartner, and composition with Vladimir Vogel. His *Mutations for Orchestra* were performed at last year's Donaueschingen Festival.

The *Trois Chants Sacrées* of Henri Pousseur⁴, and the cantata *Gacelas y casidas de F. C. Lorca* by Bengt Hambraeus⁵ stand somewhere between these works and those of the extreme *avant-garde*. The *Chants* are very brief, and are plainly indebted to the example of Webern. The pedant might object that the use of three different series within the restricted space of the first *Chant* is a miscalculation — though subsequent stages in the serial process would seem to justify this deployment. Throughout the work, each carefully-placed note has a definite expressive function, and the effect is most beautiful, if not very profound.

Insofar as the *Trois Chants* are rhythmically controlled, they may be said to have some affinity with the Hambraeus cantata. But although Pousseur makes a modest attempt to interlink serial and rhythmic elements, his rhythmic procedures amount to little more than an extension of the mediaeval principle of isorhythm. Hambraeus, on the other hand, uses more complicated techniques.

Hambraeus's position is rather a strange one, for whilst he borrows from the *avant-garde* the principle of continual series-permutation, and, like other composers of this persuasion, applies it to questions of rhythm, tone-colour, etc., he permits certain liberties in the interests of expression. In other words some elements in his compositions are entirely controlled by a series, while others are partly or wholly free. Morphologically, this is nonsense, for the methods he uses *intermittently* were evolved by Boulez, Stockhausen and others expressly as a means of investigating *pure* form. These methods are no more concerned with emotional values than is the work-plan of a scientist, and an attempt to soften their severity by loosening the internal relationships is about as logical as it would be if a physicist substituted one chemical for another during the course of an experiment, simply because he preferred the smell.

The music of Hambraeus illustrates precisely the dilemma of the progressive-minded musician of today who is anxious to retain some contact with human values. In choosing to write a cantata founded upon a poem, Hambraeus clearly establishes that his music has an expressive function. Yet the methods he employs do not give rise to any sense of musical progression, nor do they permit any kind of climax other than the exhaustion of possible permutations — and that, of course, is not perceptible to the ear. Consequently, the music is quite static, and therefore not in any true sense, expressive. Scored for soprano, flute, cor anglais, bass clarinet, vibraphone, glockenspiel, and percussion, the cantata is astonishingly simple in effect, being vaguely, inevitably, and for a short while, not unpleasingly, impressionist. It is also rather boring.

Now for the *avante-garde* proper. The works by Michel Fano⁶ (a sonata for two pianos) and Karlheinz Stockhausen (five pieces for piano) carry the principles of serialisation as far as they will go — which is some distance beyond the boundaries of music as we know it. As with Hambraeus, the music is not in any way developmental. If anything, it is deductive — the argument is centred upon some abstract formal proposition, around which a circle is explored, at whatever radius the composer thinks fit. The end of the piece — the closing of the circle — is perhaps the only dramatic event in the whole process. The music is at no point concerned with expressive considerations, and hardly at all with practical ones. It is an abstract exercise in form, using the elements of music much as a painter of abstracts uses the practical and theoretical 'facts' of representational art. This music has so little to do with the time factor that the very performance of it is something of an equivocation. It is also very nearly an impossibility.

Many of the obvious criticisms that can be levelled against these new developments are only valid if one holds that the traditional Western view of art is 'the only truth'. At the same time, it would be wrong to regard the music of Stockhausen, Boulez, Fano, and the rest as something that

⁴ Henri Pousseur. Born in 1929 in Malmédy. Studied with André Souris, and has been associated with Pierre Boulez and Karlheinz Stockhausen. The *Trois Chants Sacrées* were written in 1951 and first performed at the 1952 I.S.C.M. festival. During the past year he has been working, whenever possible, at the Cologne Radio's Research Studio for Electronic Music, where he has collaborated with Stockhausen.

⁵ Bengt Hambraeus. Born in 1928 in Stockholm. Studied organ with A. Linder, and recently broadcast a performance of Messiaen's cycle of organ pieces *Le Corps Glorieux*. At present engaged in research work on 15th and 16th Century music. Besides the Lorca Cantata, he has written a ballet, a work for trumpet, violin and piano, and a *Spectrogram* for soprano, flute, vibraphone and percussion.

⁶ Michel Fano. Born in 1929 in Paris. Studied composition with Olivier Messiaen. Collaborated with P. J. Jouve in a recently published book on Berg's *Wozzeck*.

has evolved by some magical process of self-generation. Indisputably it has its ancestry in tradition—Webern is the father of it all, and Messiaen the god-father. It is unlikely that the experiments and discoveries of these young composers will ever change the weather-beaten face of English music, but that is no reason why we should absolve ourselves from thinking about them. Questionable as much of it seems, even the most percipient critics of The New Music have not yet demolished every argument in its favour.

So much for the new works included in the concerts entitled *Musik der Jungen Generation*. These constitute about one-third of the music heard at Darmstadt. The other two-thirds consists of music by twentieth century masters, and by established composers of our own day. However, the works of four younger composers were included in the orchestral concerts. One of these, the cantata *La Victoire de Guernica* by Luigi Nono, was a severe disappointment. Nono is one of the most outstandingly gifted of the younger composers (witness his beautiful cantata *España en el Corazon*), but in this new work he appears to have temporarily succumbed to the dangerous tendencies that had begun to show themselves in his *Music for Flute and Orchestra*. There is a crippling deadweight of both academic and *avant-garde* cliché — neither of which have anything to do with the true business of composing — and the few moments of lyrical charm (always Nono's strong point) do not redeem the overall banality of invention. A blatant final section in true *pompier* style was not the least of the unwelcome shocks afforded by this work.

The other three orchestral works by younger composers were all played in the same concert — a concert that might have been entitled 'aspects of contemporary romanticism'. A neo-Straussian *Dramatic Overture* by Gunter Schuller⁷ (an American) aroused a storm of well-deserved applause. Brilliant and unsubtle, the *Overture* was worlds apart from Giselher Klebe's *Rhapsodie für Orchester*. Like all Klebe's music, it was serious and always interesting (traces of Blacher's influence were unexpected), but ultimately rather ineffective.

Hans Werner Henze's *Cello Concerto* is based programmatically on Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*. Heterodox as ever, Henze has now renounced the *avant-garde* (which he doubtless feels to be no longer short of man-power) and has become an unabashed Romantic. The *Concerto* is neither better nor worse than anything else he has written — that is to say it is quite uncritical, by turns brilliant and worthless, loose in form almost to the point of congenital vagueness, and yet, for all that, unmistakably and outstandingly talented. One wonders how much longer Henze will continue to be merely a potentially good composer.

The remaining work in this orchestral concert was the dramatic monodrama *Medea* by Ernst Krenek, another curious and unexpected lapse into the nineteenth century. Viewed dispassionately, the work is scarcely more remarkable musically than anything else Krenek has given us. Yet the fact remains that on a fairly low level, it is astonishingly effective. The general public at Darmstadt were plainly thrilled by it, and recalled the composer and the soloist (Miss Blanche Thebom) numerous times. The intelligentsia left the hall muttering the names of Menotti and Mascagni under their breath, and someone cruelly described the piece as 'a poor-man's *Erwartung*'. Neither the enthusiasm of the many, nor the scorn of the few, was without justification. But it was noticeable that none of the other works by Krenek given at Darmstadt aroused anything like such strong feelings, either way.

Krenek's pre-war reputation as an *avant-gardiste* was never a very fair one. Today, he plainly finds himself somewhere near the rearguard, fighting a thoughtful, rather than ardent, battle for his dodecaphonic faith, and from time to time making a firm truce with tonality. Certainly it was illuminating to find that in his composition classes he adopted an attitude not a whit more 'advanced' than might be expected from the more enlightened academic circles in this country. Thus, while frankly admitting his puzzlement at certain advanced tendencies, he did not attempt to pass judgement. But for his own part, he was content with the ancient virtues of comprehensibility and expressiveness.

Music by major figures of our time naturally provided the most rewarding experiences of the course. There is only space enough here to give thanks for the opportunity of hearing live per-

⁷ Gunter Schuller. Born 1925. Studied music with his father (a violinist in the New York Philharmonic) and later at the Manhattan School of Music. As a composer he is self-taught, but after meeting Kolisch and Steuermann, he made an intensive study of Schoenberg's works, which have consequently been a decisive influence upon his music. At the moment plays first horn at the Metropolitan Opera. Works include a Symphony for woodwind, a 'Cello concerto, an Oboe sonata and a fantasy for solo 'cello.

formances of Webern's wonderful *Variations for Orchestra*, opus 30, of Schoenberg's *Piano Concerto* (with Steuermann as soloist), of Stravinsky's *Capriccio* (with the winner of this year's Kranichsteiner Music-prize at the piano), and of Ravel's *Frontispiece* for two pianos. This last is a rarity — a minute binary piece, with a first section of great beauty and harmonic interest.

In the sphere of instrumental music we heard, amongst other things, Schoenberg's first *Chamber Symphony* in Webern's useful arrangement for flute, clarinet, violin, cello, and piano, Messiaen's *Quatuor pour la Fin du temps* (abominably played, with the exception of Mlle. Loriod at the piano), Britten's *Lachrymae* for viola and piano, and Dallapiccola's *Quaderno Musicale*. Amongst the more memorable performances were those by Kolisch and Steuermann of Schoenberg's *Fantasy* for violin, opus 47, and by Yvonne Loriod of Messiaen's *Canteyodjaya*. The distinguished Italian flautist Severino Gazzelloni also deserves the highest praise for the way in which he coped with an awesome number of difficult scores.

It would be impossible here to mention a tenth of the supplementary music, heard outside official programmes — in private performances, in instrumental classes, and in lecture recitals. Notable amongst the latter for its musicality and fair-mindedness was a series of six talks on Webern by René Leibowitz.

Everyone who was present at this amazing course-cum-festival will recall with admiration the efficiency with which it was organized. The only failures were artistic ones — which, in an undertaking of this size, is only to be expected, though not always to be condoned. In the main the 1954 course was a great success, and there is every reason to look forward to the tenth anniversary session next year, for which occasion ten works have been specially commissioned from young composers. The intellectual and practical vitality of this summer-school is inexhaustible; and how valuable that is, in an age that is torn between thought without action, and action without thought.

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